

IN THE BIG TIME

KATHERINE L. BAKELESS



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In the big time.

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IN THE BIG TIME



Career Stories of
American Entertainers

BY KATHERINE LITTLE BAKELESS

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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FIRST EDITION

TO
The Old Crowd

Jo, Kit B., Peg, Kit R., Syl,
Rish, Demmy, Bake, Hutch, and,
in memoriam, Dill.

From Broadway to Hollywood, from the concert hall to the tanbark, Katherine Bakeless has gone backstage to give career-minded readers varied and vivid biographies of American entertainers, including famous circus clowns, who have reached the "big time."

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YOUNG PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

YOUNG PEOPLE, desirous of making a success in one of the many fields of entertainment, often like to know how established artists made their starts, and how they achieved recognition. These career stories, each showing how an American artist or entertainer climbed the long ladder from obscurity to Big Time, have been written with these young readers in mind.

The choice of subjects is not based on the belief that each is necessarily the best in his own field. Instead, each story has been chosen because it contains some incidents, or accidents, that are interesting and some points that may be suggestive to aspirants.

The road to Big Time has never been quite the same for any of those who have traveled it. In most cases it was long and difficult, though a few arrived by sheer good luck. The good luck, however, was backed up by the striver's own abilities, or talents, or individual style. The element of luck may come in winning recognition, never in the acquisition of a technique. Hard work goes into the technique. But personality and showmanship can cover defects in ability, talent, and even knowledge. Then, too, one important element in all things, from cooking to making a favorable impression on someone else, is in the timing. The time must be right for the "break."

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IN THE BIG TIME

KATHARINE CORNELL

✧ *Actress* ✧

IN THE city of Buffalo, a doctor's little girl was growing up during the first decade of this century. Children are usually interested in their fathers' professions, because father's work is the first kind they ever hear mentioned. Dr. Cornell's little daughter took enough interest in her father's work to think about being a nurse when she grew up, but from the very start the theatre interested her more than anything else. That was because Katharine Cornell, from the first minute she was able to understand what people were talking about, heard theatre talk and discussions of show business, though she was a doctor's daughter. Dr. Cornell cared more about the theater than anything else.

He had taken his young bride to Germany, where he finished his medical studies. Their baby, Katharine, was born in Berlin, and when she was six months old, the family returned to Buffalo where the young doctor began to practice medicine. Nine years later he made a very important decision. He decided to stop being a doctor, and devote all his time to what had ever been his real enthusiasm—the production of amateur shows. His own father before him had likewise loved nothing more than to put on a play.

Katharine's grandfather was also a gifted amateur actor. His friend, John Drew, thought he was a brilliant director of plays, and John Drew was a good judge, for he was one of the popular American actors of his day. He was an uncle to the Barrymores—Lionel, Ethel, and John—all bright stars of the American stage.

Buffalo was considered a good show town among theatrical folk. Plays on the road received a happy welcome and response there. This may have been largely due to Katharine's grandfather's activities, which certainly gave the people of that city more opportunities to see plays than if they had had to wait for visiting companies. But there were more plays on the road then than there were after the movies began to be popular five-cent entertainment.

One can easily understand that, with such a background, some of the first words the little Cornell girl came to know, were words commonly used by people of the theatre. Words like cue, costume, make-up, exit, were as familiar to her as cat and rat.

She was also familiar with stage setting, because in the attic of her grandfather's house in Buffalo there was a complete stage with a curving proscenium and a curtain. As a little girl, she could go there, sit on the steps, and watch rehearsals. She was charmed by it all and grew up to say that acting was in her blood, and that the feeling for acting was absolutely born in her.

When she was eight, Katharine wrote her first play in collaboration with a girl friend. It was called *The Hidden Treasure*. Katharine produced it, acted in it, and, realizing that it should be reviewed in a paper, printed her own four-page paper, with her review under the heading "Acting Is Hard." She stated that they had made twenty cents on the whole thing.

Even at this time, when she was emulating her father, she did not think of acting as the thing to do in the far-off days when she grew up. Instead, she was thinking that it might be nice to be a trained nurse. The next year, when she was nine, her father became manager and part owner of the Star Theatre.

A year or two later came the experience that made Katharine decide to be an actress. Maude Adams appeared in the Star Theatre in *Peter Pan*. Katharine had looked forward to the play with eager anticipation. When the time came, she was so excited she could hardly look at the great actress. Maude Adams's acting, exquisite beyond her wild-ets dreams, overwhelmed her. It was the greatest emotional experience the child had ever felt. She decided then and there upon her own future career, but, for a time, this wonderful decision was a treasured secret which she hugged to herself. When finally she did confide in her mother, she was told that it was possible that she might change her mind. She never did. From that hour on, Katharine Cornell was determined upon her future work.

As yet, however, plays were not the only thing. Katharine went to school. She loved outdoor fun, athletics, and acrobatics. Her nursery was equipped with a punching bag and a trapeze. Once she was invited to perform as a gymnast at a charity circus. She went farther in acrobatics than most children do who try to imitate the fancy tumbling and swinging they see in a circus, because a professional acrobat taught her to walk the slack wire. When she could do this on a slack wire in her own back yard, she was the envy of all the other children. She roller-skated everywhere, even in the foyer of her father's theatre, where the floor was nice and smooth. Even though she could do outdoor things like these better than most little girls, she was very

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shy and sensitive, and was therefore sometimes hurt by other children's thoughtless ways.

Every summer the Jessie Bonstelle Stock Company played in Buffalo. Katharine was permitted to watch all the rehearsals, and she would sit by herself in the darkened room every afternoon observing Miss Bonstelle's excellent direction and learning the phrases that are used in play direction. She never wearied of it. One day Miss Bonstelle told her to hurry and grow up so she could play "Jo" for her. She was referring to the part of Jo in *Little Women*, who was, at that time, Katharine's favorite book character. The mere suggestion thrilled her, but of course she did not dream that it would ever come true.

When she was fifteen and ready for high school, Katharine was sent to Oaksmere, a boarding school at Mamaronock, New York. There she was encouraged to spend most of her time on the two things she liked the best, drama and athletics. She excelled in tennis and swimming. Of her other studies, she liked psychology, Bible, and the history of the novel the best.

Oaksmere had not done much in the drama until Katharine Cornell went there. Her intense interest inspired other students, and the study of the drama was given more importance while she was there. Thus encouraged, Katharine wrote plays, directed them, made the sets, and acted, but was most interested in the direction of the productions. During her last year at Oaksmere, she put on a new play every two weeks—ideal preparation for stock work. A coach from the newly organized Washington Square Players in New York came out to the school to direct the final stages of the rehearsals. That year, Katharine played the part of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, appeared in a play of Shaw's,

and acted in a comedy she herself had written. After her own play was performed, the coach, Edward Goodman, director of the Washington Square Players, told her that if she was thinking of going into the theatre, she should let him know when she came to New York.

She followed up this important contact. After she was through at school, Katharine went to New York and began watching and studying the rehearsals of the Washington Square Players. With her aunt for chaperone, she lived in a city apartment while she haunted the theatres. For a long time nothing happened. Nobody seemed to notice her. Then one day, when some actors were going to read for parts, Mr. Goodman—the same coach who had come to Oaksmere—asked Katharine if she would not like to read for one of the parts.

Now some people read easily and swiftly, their eyes catching many words at a glance, while others read slowly and laboriously each word as it comes. Reading aloud was never one of Katharine's strong points, and though she was delighted at being noticed at last, she was at the same time frightened. What she was afraid of happening was, of course, what happened. As she tried to read the lines she held in her hands, she simply could not raise her voice. Try as she might, her voice would not sound. She was bitterly disappointed. Later on, when she read for parts with the same wretched result, she was fortunate enough to have directors observing her who, having seen her act, knew that she possessed genuine ability.

Her first chance occurred in the autumn of 1916. Eager to study the rehearsals of a certain play, she told the director that if he would allow her merely to sit and watch she would not bother anyone with requests. She attended the

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rehearsals faithfully—more faithfully than one of the professionals. When one of the actresses failed to appear one day, the director called on Katharine Cornell to substitute and read the part. The character was a Japanese woman, and all she had to say was “My son—my son.” Having studied the rehearsals so long, Katharine knew her cue, and at the proper moment she spoke the words. She did more than speak the words—she felt them. Her voice was vibrant with feeling, and the cast burst into applause! The other actress, considering the small four-word part too insignificant and not worth bothering about, dropped out for good, whereupon Katharine was offered the part.

All true artists have the ability, the wisdom, and the patience to take pains with even the smallest details. There is no great artist without this quality.

Though the part was indeed a very slim one in a one-act play with only a semi-professional company, Katharine regarded it as her high moment so far and gave it her best. She worked over those four words almost every waking moment. She tried them with every possible tone and inflection. The result was that, when she spoke them on the stage at last, they were far from insignificant. On the contrary, those few words she spoke impressed the other actors and all who heard her. Her manner, her style, her acting gave significance to the small part.

The young actress had two advantages that every beginner on the New York stage does not have: She did not have to earn her own living while she was seeking an opening, and she was able to meet, through her family's friends, people whose influence could be advantageous. One of these family friends believed in her talent and introduced her to the Favershams, and other actors, at a party. It

seems strange that a young girl fresh out of finishing school, starting to live in New York, would find parties a chore, but that is the way Katharine felt about them. She did not like parties, and felt miserably self-conscious when she went to them. Not long after this important dinner party, Mr. Faversham offered Katharine Cornell an opportunity to try out for a leading part in his new play.

Most young girls would have snatched at such a golden opportunity. But Katharine had not only been studying acting and directing, she had also been analyzing her own progress. Feeling that she was not ready, as yet, for a lead part, she declined. She said she did not want to get ahead of herself. Instead of accepting this flattering offer, she joined the Washington Square Players, and worked hard with them for two years. The first year she received no pay at all; the second year she received the total sum of \$40. But she was constantly learning and she was meeting people of the theatre. At a gathering where actors were discussing the formation of a Theatre Guild, Katharine was much impressed by the views of one young man whose name, she found out, was Guthrie McClintic.

After her second season, she received a definite offer from her old friend, Jessie Bonstelle, to play fifth business in summer stock at \$50 a week. Fifth business meant that she was to play the bit parts—the maids, nurses, housekeepers, waitresses—necessary parts of course, but the least exciting. By this time, the director of the Washington Square Players, who had followed her development since her Oaksmere days, was enough impressed with her talents to ask her to remain with them. She accepted Miss Bonstelle's offer instead.

Miss Bonstelle wrote Dr. Cornell to say that she had en-

gaged a young woman for the coming season in Buffalo whom she regarded as showing great promise—the young woman was his own daughter. Dr. Cornell replied that he thought Miss Bonstelle must have gone crazy. Even her own father did not foresee that Katharine Cornell would become a great actress. He did know that stock work demanded grueling labor, and he assumed that his daughter would tire of the grind. He did not know that her desire and ambition were great enough to overcome the drudgery.

This was the summer Katharine was twenty. The Bonstelle Stock Company presented fourteen plays in Buffalo during the summer, and the heat there that year mounted to 94° and even to 102°. Each Monday night, a new play opened and played for the week. While one play was being acted in the evenings, the next week's play was being rehearsed both mornings and afternoons, except when matinees took place on Thursdays and Sundays. There were rehearsals Sunday mornings, performances at night. The only free time in the whole week was Thursday morning, and then the actors had to attend to the business of making or securing their own costumes. These were not supplied; they had to get, or make, their own, and they were not allowed to appear in the same dress in two different shows. There was no maid's help at all. As Katharine could not sew, her pay did not begin to cover her expenses for clothes. After the Stock Company played in Buffalo, they played in Detroit, and during three years of playing stock in Buffalo and Detroit, Katharine went so heavily in debt that it took her some years to pay for the clothes she had had to use.

After Monday night's performances, the parts were given out for the following week's play. There was only one week

in which to memorize a part. It was hard and constant work, but the actress realized that she was learning the greatest lessons, not only in acting, but in the whole business of play production. Miss Bonstelle was an excellent director, and, observing her, Katharine learned the basic principle of theatre work, and, in truth, all work where teamwork is required: "You cannot become important if you do not know how to work with people." Miss Bonstelle understood each actor, helping each to develop. She was equal to any situation that arose, and could manage to put a smooth production together in a week. There was very little friction in the company. Everybody studied hard, worked hard, and was on time. Miss Bonstelle kept good discipline. There is nothing like stock work, Miss Cornell says, to teach the young actor or actress the necessary business and discipline of the theatre. She has always felt deeply grateful for the many valuable lessons she learned while working under Miss Bonstelle's direction.

After her first summer of stock work, Katharine Cornell returned to New York to hunt another job. She went the rounds. This meant that each day she walked miles, calling at offices of agencies and managers, hoping to find a part in a play. The continual round from office to office, up and down stairs and elevators, trying to penetrate beyond the office girl in the front room in order to talk with a manager, was exhausting and dispiriting. Aspiring actors and actresses by the thousands have gone these rounds.

Again it was her good friend, Jessie Bonstelle, who came forth with an offer. She telephoned Katharine one day that she was going to direct a play for the actress, Grace George. There was a part in it for Katharine. She should come and read the part. Ah, there was the old bugbear—reading a

part. As always, she was scared at having to read. Although she had often acted in such scenes as this one, when the time came for her to stand up on the stage and read, she could not utter a sound. Miss George said that perhaps it was not the kind of scene that Miss Cornell could do, and presumed that the young actress herself was skeptical of being able to manage it. Miss Bonstelle knew better and protested that Miss Cornell was equal to it. But Katharine did not try to explain her failure. She merely handed her part back to the stage manager and left the theatre, bitterly disappointed. She walked out to Fifth Avenue, crying.

What was she to do? The failure to secure the part was, for the moment, almost crushing. It so happened that a friend of hers had a car in Washington and wanted it brought to New York. On the spur of the moment, Katharine decided to go and bring the car for her friend. It would give her time to think. Returning two days later, she discovered that her greatest mistake had been to leave the theatre that day and to have been discouraged too soon. Miss George had wanted to do her scene again and, being told that Miss Cornell had left the theatre, concluded, "There, you see. She hasn't the right stuff in her."

This proved to be another valuable lesson. The young actress realized that she had been too quick to jump to a conclusion. She should not have dropped out, just because things had not gone easily at once. She had permitted herself to feel hurt too soon. As a result of this experience, her advice to others is: "Always stay, stand the gaff, and hope—as long as there is any hope—that you can finally bring the thing off."

Billed at first not under her own name, but under the name of the actress who had formerly played the part,

Katharine Cornell's first tour was in *The Man Who Came Back*. She received \$100 a week for what was not exactly a comfortable rôle. It was a part in which she had to be whipped and beaten, and she admitted that often the blood would come through her white dress. Even so, she liked the experience though it was far from glamorous. They played in small towns, slept in bad hotels, ate awful food, and were sometimes called out of bed in the middle of the night with the temperature at zero, to catch a 4:00 A.M. train to the next town. Sometimes they did not get to bed at all, but rode all night in the stuffy day coaches of those times before cars were air-conditioned, when the backs of the seats were straight up and and not adjustable. It was during the bad influenza epidemic after World War I, and, between performances, the actress nursed another girl of the company who had succumbed.

After the tour, Miss Cornell returned to the Bonstelle Stock Company for another summer season. This time she received \$60 a week, and was given the second leads. In the autumn of 1919, a big chance came her way again, and again it came through Miss Bonstelle. It was also a childhood dream come true, for it was the offer of going to London to play the part of Jo in *Little Women*. Miss Cornell was to be the only American in an English cast.

Miss Bonstelle was the director and worked very hard with Katharine in whose stage future she had now for some years heartily believed. "After every performance," recalls the actress, "she would come to my dressing room and go at me about everything." Such painstaking criticism and analysis was priceless.

When the London season was over, Miss Cornell returned to still another summer of stock. This time Miss

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Bonstelle had engaged a young New York director named Guthrie McClintic—whom Miss Cornell had noted at a meeting two years before. This summer Miss Bonstelle was trying out plays for New York producers, and even now Katharine had her share of disappointments when she felt that the directors did not think she was good enough for some of the parts, but she was host to other emotions as well. She was falling in love.

The first time that Guthrie McClintic had seen her on the stage, he had jotted down in his notes: "Monotonous—interesting—watch." Later, he saw her across the room in a manager's office and remarked to a friend, "You know, it is a strange thing to say, but today I saw the girl I'm going to marry."

Time had passed, and busy people had been busy. Now, during another hot summer's grind in stock routine, the two found themselves working together, and a courtship was in progress. In the life of an actress there is no time for evening dates. Evening is work time. In stock work, day-time is work time, too. This summer, Katharine was doing most of the leads, and Mr. McClintic was both acting and directing. After the night performances, they would stroll in the park. They fancied a particular bench and often sat there into the early morning hours, dreaming and discussing their hopes for the future in their theatrical careers. A policeman kept a fatherly eye on them, but one early dawn, he walked up to them and said, "Ain't you two got no home?" They said they had, whereupon he suggested bluntly, "Then why don't you go to it?"

During the next winter in New York, the courtship continued. On fair Sundays in the spring, Katharine took her young man to a lovely spot she remembered from school

days on the shore of the Sound at Mamaroneck. They would spend the day making a fire, cooking their lunch on the shore, swimming, and reading plays together. One day, they read *A Bill of Divorcement*, a play which they both liked at once. Katharine was thinking, "I could play that girl," though she felt that it was like sighing for the moon, since she was still unknown on Broadway.

Imagine, then, the excitement with which she read a postcard from the agency that came in the very next morning's mail, telling her that the English actor who had bought that play was inquiring if she would be free the coming season to play in *The Bill of Divorcement*. She learned afterward, that he had specifically requested the actress he had seen in London the year before who played the part of Jo, in *Little Women*.

Though Katharine Cornell had by this time played several seasons downtown and in out-of-town stock, she was still unknown uptown on Broadway. The Dillingham office—the office of Broadway's most fashionable producer at that time—regarded the choice of Cornell for that part an absurd decision. But the actor-owner of the play insisted upon having her.

With these bright prospects, Miss Cornell and Mr. McClintic decided to be married. The wedding took place at the home of her aunt in Cobourg one September noon. With no time for a honeymoon, the McClintics took the ferry to Rochester that afternoon, and were in New York the next day for the actress to answer a rehearsal call.

A Bill of Divorcement got off to a poor start with lukewarm and indifferent reviews. Four other new productions made their first appearances the same night, and the critics and first-nighters were scattered in five different theatres.

With many openings on the same night, it is possible for a distinguished play to go comparatively unnoticed. The second night, the box office took in a meager \$200, and it looked as if the show would have to close in two weeks. But something happened. Among the few who had seen it and regarded it highly was the writer Carl Van Vechten. He considered it a wonderful play and he asked Alexander Woolcott, a popular critic, to go to see the play and "do something about it."

Alexander Woolcott saw the play, liked it so much that he urged the drama critics to feature it in their next Sunday's papers. The result was that, on Monday night, the intake jumped to \$1,200, and from there it mounted steadily. In three weeks the houses were sold out. This was the top. Success had come at last.

The same season, Mr. McClintic produced *Dover Road*, also a brilliant success, which brought him much acclaim. Sharing in this double success, the actress and the producer celebrated by buying a house in New York overlooking the East River. Their dreams on the park bench the year before were now beginning to come true.

During the next ten years, Miss Cornell acted in a dozen plays or more. Though the plays were mediocre, the actress's ability and talents were acknowledged everywhere, and by 1931, she was being called one of the two foremost actresses in this country. Her magnetic personality, her eloquent and smooth technique triumphed over commonplace rôles.

It was while she was on tour with *Dishonored Lady* that she read a play about *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. She liked it so much that she wired her agents to buy it. She wanted it for her husband to produce, but when he read it,

he determined that she was the one to play the part of Elizabeth.

The Barretts of Wimpole Street with Katharine Cornell was one of the most distinguished and brilliant performances Broadway had ever had. Three seasons later, her Juliet, supported by a magnificent cast in the Shakespeare love tragedy, was another supreme accomplishment which will never be forgotten by theatre lovers of the time. Some tender sentiment caused the actress to wish to play her first Juliet in her home town. She said later that it took her a whole winter and all the following summer to come to feel that she could "even touch" Juliet. She had to work into it slowly, she said, over a considerable period of time. This thoroughness showed in her acting, and by the time *Romeo and Juliet* reached Broadway, her portrayal of the part and the whole production was perfection. One writer observed that she was a "studious actress who designs her parts scrupulously," adding that though her voice might not be beautiful in itself, "it is laden with passion and it can lick at the dialogue like a flame. She uses it like a musical instrument."

A grand tour of the United States followed, and four carloads of actors, costumes, and properties traveled about 17,000 miles. Miss Cornell and her company offered her three best plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, and *Candida*, to audiences throughout the country. They were on the road twenty-nine weeks, and gave 225 performances. In some sections they visited, people had not seen legitimate theatre for a whole generation, and some were distinctly puzzled as to what kind of entertainment was being announced. In one western city, the inquiries made the company feel like a troupe of traveling

snakes, the actress later reported. Calling the theatre, people would ask what the picture was about. Being told that it was not a picture but a stage play, they would exclaim, "Real actors—you mean they're alive?" Others wanted to know if Miss Cornell was a soprano or a contralto. When they were told she was neither, but an actress, they asked, "You mean she doesn't sing? Then how does she entertain an audience?"

The most exciting time occurred on the night before Christmas, when they were scheduled to play in Seattle, Mr. McClintic's home town. As the train chugged over the long stretch westward from Duluth, rain came down in torrents. When they approached flooded areas, with wash-outs ahead, the train slowed down to a crawl. The troupers sang Christmas carols and the dining-car waiters joined in. Several times the train stopped. At one point, it had to wait while an emergency crew of workmen constructed a temporary trestle for a long stretch where the track had been washed out. The train had been due at their destination at eight in the morning, but by theatre time in the evening, it was still chugging on its way through the down-pour. The company gave up all hope of ringing up their curtain for that much-anticipated Christmas Eve performance.

It was after theatre time—11:15 that night—when the train finally pulled into the station. Deeply disappointed, Miss Cornell and her company descended from the train to be greeted by a most astonishing and thrilling surprise. The local manager met them by announcing that the audience was still at the theatre waiting for them! Three hours an audience had been waiting. What a Christmas present! The play would certainly go on.

Amid a bustle of action, scenery and costumes were moved to the theatre. Miss Cornell conceived the brilliant idea of permitting the patient audience to see how the stage set was erected. The wardrobe mistress unpacked the trunks on the stage in full view, so the people could see the actors come to collect their costumes. Mr. McClintic and the stage manager described all the parts of the setting while the scenery was being put into place. Gradually the audience was transported, in imagination, to a house on Wimpole Street, in London, and taken back in time to the days when the poet Browning was a young man. Miss Elizabeth Barrett's little dog Flush was introduced. By one o'clock in the morning, everything was ready. They could begin. The curtain was lowered. Lights went down, and the footlights flashed up.

At five minutes after one in the morning, the curtain went up on *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, which was an unusually long play. The final curtain went down at four. The audience had been there since eight-thirty the night before. But they had been rewarded by seeing a magnificent performance. They cheered the actors who had played their very best, recalling them time after time to take their bows. Appreciation flowed from both audience and cast. Miss Cornell said afterward, "I don't think I ever gave a better performance or played to a more divine audience."

The actress found the whole tour a thrilling experience. She loved the audiences and was deeply moved when people came hundreds of miles from remote spots in order to see a play with living actors. She said, "I never got tired of it, not even of the one-night stands. I guess I'm a born hobo."

After the New York opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, she

was moved to tears. "You always feel," she explained, "that you could be better in Shakespeare." She was constantly amazed because, each time she played Juliet, she discovered new possibilities she had not realized were there. This is precisely the quality in all of the greatest art, be it music, plays, poetry, painting, sculpture or literature. It is the enduring part. Appreciation of it demands thought and reflection, however, so it has come to be called high-brow by the low-brows. But those who take the time and trouble to find such beauties live incomparably richer lives.

Miss Cornell dislikes the star system. She thinks the qualities that make a star have little to do with genuine acting. Stars who like to be supported by second- and third-rate actors, so that they themselves may shine the brighter, are doing a disservice to their art and to the play. The play itself is most important to her. "And the play can only be served," she maintains, "by having each part cast as well and played as carefully as the leading rôles."

No one can give another a formula for success. The actress feels that each person must find his own path. As to how to get started, how to go about the business of being an actress, she says, "the whole secret lies in finding out those things for oneself." The first requisite is "fierce determination, a deep conviction that acting is the thing you must do." Intelligence, awareness, sensitivity, self-effacement are requisites, too, and certainly industry—the ability to work, work, and work, even when the outlook is discouraging. Self-effacement means having a consideration for others, especially for those with whom one is working. It also means willingness to take direction. One must be reliable and resourceful. One must have perseverance. To learn to use the voice properly is most important for the

young actor or actress. Miss Cornell found that she was benefited by reading aloud in French.

She also considers it highly important that young actresses should do all they can to round out their educations in their spare time. They should visit art galleries, hear the best music, read the best books, and watch the finest actors and actresses, all of which they can do in New York, which is, after all, the actor's Mecca in these United States.

But getting started in the theatre has a great element of luck in it. Miss Cornell says a producer must see the right person at just the right time. To get that kind of break, "a girl has to keep pounding away and tramp the streets from one manager's office to another, no matter how discouraging it may be." Then "she must remember that when the break does come, she must have the equipment necessary to capitalize on it." She says, "I get the impression that most of the young girls who come to me for parts simply haven't worked hard enough."

Then she rates discipline, a sense of responsibility, and a very human and understanding relationship with one's associates as necessary to keep one at the top in the profession. However, "where there is work one loves and is determined to do well, there is contentment," she observes, "which in turn fosters ambition to do even better."

Having grown up in cities, Miss Cornell most loves to get away to the country, or to her island summer home at Martha's Vineyard. She takes great pains in selecting her stage costumes, but she finds it rather a bore to spend time on her own wardrobe, preferring to dress in easy slacks and country clothes.

This actress who has had so many successes to her credit was "scared silly," she said, when she went to the White

House to receive an award and make her response. Just before each New York opening, she becomes very nervous until she is out before the audience. This pre-performance nervous state is quite common among the most sensitive artists, actors, and musicians. Some critics feel that it contributes to a sharper and better performance.

JAMES STEWART

✧ *Actor* ✧

THOUGH he ranks as one of the most successful actors of filmdom, James Stewart never even thought of acting until he had grown up and finished college. In this he differed from most artists and actors, who usually show in childhood an inclination—in some cases a definite ability—that points to their future adult careers.

There was nothing like this in James Stewart's early life. He was just an average American boy, born May 20, 1908, in the typical American small town of Indiana, Pennsylvania, but it is worth noting that he came of first-class, patriotic American stock, which has been willing to serve the country in four successive wars in three generations.

James's father, Alexander Stewart, had a hardware store. When he was a young man, he served his country during the brief Spanish-American war. When his small son, James Maitland Stewart, was about ready for the second or third grade in school, he went away again to fight for his country. This time he was a Captain of Ordnance, and saw service in France during the first World War. His own father, another James Maitland Stewart, had also marched away to his country's call, wearing the Union Blue in the Civil War. The Stewarts were men possessed of a sense of

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duty to their country, honorable citizens of the kind who make a nation and hold it together.

The boy Jimmy, like most boys, found life full of interesting things. He did not have to play store, because there was his father's real store, with bicycles and express wagons as well as hardware. He was in his first school years when his father went away to the war in which airplanes were first used. Growing up at such a time, it is no wonder that Jimmy loved airplanes and began to make models of them. These were exhibited in his father's store. A few years later, Boy Scout Jimmy became interested in chemistry, and also in magic. When the magician, William Neff, appeared in town, Jimmy earned some pin money serving as magician's assistant in performances. He also earned pin money working in the store. Producing plays and acting in them was another activity in which young Jimmy and his friends engaged, giving performances in their back yards and in the basements of their houses. Jimmy once favored his mother's friends with a complete one-boy Washington's Birthday show.

Upon reaching preparatory school age, Jimmy was sent to Mercersburg Academy to prepare for his father's Alma Mater, Princeton University. While at Mercersburg, he took up an extra bit of light study which did not seem important at the time, but which turned out to be one of the most important things he ever did, because it was his ticket of admission to his life's career: He learned to play the accordion.

Jimmy enjoyed doing a bit part in the Senior play. He had grown to be very tall, and in sports he was good at hurdles, high jumping, and basket ball. After Mercersburg, Jimmy entered Princeton. He helped pay expenses by de-

signing programs and tickets for football games and other sporting events.

In common with many other boys, Jimmy could not decide what he wanted to do. Trying electrical engineering, he almost flunked it. Hoping to do better in civil engineering, he turned to that, but it was not much of an improvement. In this groping manner, he found his way into architecture, and there things went well. He received an offer of a scholarship in architecture when he graduated in the Class of 1932.

Before that time came, however, Jimmy had been doing other things besides trying out college courses. Possessing a very pleasant, modest, and attractive personality, Stewart played his way, with his accordion, into the Triangle Club, the famous Princeton dramatic organization. In the club's 1931 show, he was assigned the lead part. A talent scout from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, present at this production, took note of Stewart's name.

In these activities, James Stewart was making the good friends that mean so much in college life. Important in themselves, these friendships can also be of great help in the years after college is over. Joshua Logan, who has since become one of the important Broadway show producers, was one of Stewart's best friends. He and several others leaned definitely toward the theatre. Graduating before Stewart, Logan began to direct a Summer Stock Company at Falmouth, on Cape Cod.

Returning to Princeton on a visit, Logan related his summer's experiences to Stewart with much enthusiasm, and raved about the leading actors they had had—Henry Fonda and Peggy Sullavan. This leading lady, he said, would be coming to Princeton in *The Artist and the Lady*. Margaret

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Sullavan, after graduating from college, had taken her dramatic training in stock company work in Boston under the late E. E. Clive.

When the time came, James Stewart went to see the play, and invited Miss Sullavan to a reception. This was the start of a good friendship, and a few years later Miss Sullavan was to prove to be one of Stewart's most ardent champions, when he needed friends in Hollywood.

The Artist and the Lady was Miss Sullavan's stepping-stone to Broadway. A playwright, who saw the show, wired the Shuberts that he had seen a brilliant actress. As a result of this, she made her début on Broadway. James Stewart now had an opportunity to call at the stage door and have a glimpse into New York's exciting theatrical life.

Meanwhile, he was approaching Commencement Day with no definite plans for the future, except that he would try to get a job in an architect's office. He graduated at a time when the whole country was in the doldrums from an economic depression that had been going on for two and a half years. Nobody had money to build anything. It was a bad time to get out of college and start looking for jobs. It was extra bad for a young architect, for architects were not much needed at the moment.

Many college boys and girls at graduation find themselves standing at the crossroads, and the way they take then influences their whole lives. For artists whose childhood activities, talents and tastes indicate what they will do in adult life, the course is clear. Such were Menuhin, Mulholland, Astaire, List, Anderson, Cornell. Others like Ives, Stewart, Hildegarde, almost seem to be yanked like puppets on invisible strings in a certain direction. The man who yanked Stewart's string at this time of indecision was his

friend Logan who now offered the young graduate a job in the summer stock company at Falmouth. Not realizing it was a call of fate, James was not much interested. But Logan was very enthusiastic and, since there was nothing to be found in an architect's office, James decided to try acting for the summer. When autumn came, he would try to find the office job.

Looking back later on the important part this summer of 1932 played in his subsequent career, Stewart once said, "the odd part of it is that I almost passed up Falmouth. But Logan's enthusiasm finally won me over. We were known as the University Players—we made our own scenery, wrote plays, directed them, and besides acting, took turns at selling tickets and sweeping out."

One of the plays tried out there that summer was the charming *Goodbye Again*. Jimmy had a part; he had just one line to say. In the autumn, *Goodbye Again* opened on Broadway starring the excellent actor, the late Osgood Perkins. And there was Jimmy—with his one line! To architecture he had said goodbye again. Later he said that he learned a great deal about acting from Perkins. So Jimmy Stewart thus found himself in the theatre world without ever having spent time wanting it, or energy yearning for it. He was there. He was a part of it.

Many of his friends in that glowing life of entertainment, used to meet on Thursday nights in an old basement speak-easy in West 40th Street, where they indulged in shop talk. The charter members of this group of cronies were Joshua Logan, Stewart, Henry Fonda, Myron McCormack, Burgess Meredith—all budding actors, who called themselves the Thursday Night Beer Club. One dollar took care of the dues, steak sandwiches and beer. As yet, these

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young men had no particular recognition except by themselves! But they recognized each other heartily, promising each other that one of these days they would be important persons in the theatre. Sometimes they invited guests to their TNBC talk fests, and these included Helen Hayes, Katharine Cornell, Margaret Sullavan, and others both known and unknown. Everybody talked and sang songs. James played his accordion.

After his first Broadway experience, Stewart acted as stage manager for Jane Cowl in Boston the next summer. She was starring in *Camille*. The next season, Stewart was back on Broadway in a play called *Spring in Autumn*. He appeared in several New York productions during the following two years, including Sidney Howard's play *Yellow Jack*, for which he learned to speak an Irish brogue in order to act the part of an Irish soldier. Drama critics now began to notice him, and when he appeared in *Journey At Night*, a talent scout who saw him offered him a screen test. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer signed him up in 1935—just three years after he graduated from college with the idea of being an architect.

In Hollywood, James Stewart, after acting in a picture or two, dropped out of sight. In Hollywood's crazy, extravagant, booming years, many good things dropped out of sight. Thousands and thousands of dollars were wasted in starting things that were never finished. Stewart was wandering around Hollywood trying to make up his mind whether to stay on and hope for something to turn up, or return to Broadway, when he ran into his old friend Margaret Sullavan. When she learned that he was out of a job, she recommended him for the rôle opposite her in her new

film, *Next Time We Love*. This opened the way for greater Hollywood success for both actors.

It was not long until Jimmy was making as many as six major pictures in a period of eleven months, working on them so steadily that most of them overlapped. In all that time he had three days off. At the end of it, when the six pictures were finished, he went to New York where he spent his short three-day holiday, he said, "catching up in his sleep."

Hollywood kept James Stewart a busy man, working even harder than before, sometimes doing as many as nine pictures a year. Only five short years after he graduated, he was at a point far beyond his wildest dreams, as he sat with his friends of the Thursday Night Bear Club. Those friends too had gone far, as they had promised.

Stewart's accordion playing had been his touchstone. His natural assets were a winning personality, a subtle and droll sense of humor, and intelligence which enabled him to study the art of acting from other actors as he went along. Unassuming, polite, never growing angry or excited, he was easy to work with. Busy as he was, he liked to pretend he was lazy. But he admitted that his success was gratifying "It's all been a very satisfactory accident," he said. "A few good friends, a couple of lucky breaks, some hard work I'll admit, and here I am." Without realizing it, he had what some one called a certain gift for the stage, but Jimmy said, "it's all luck. If I hadn't been at some particular place at some particular time and some one hadn't happened to say so-and-so and I hadn't answered this-and-that, I'd still be hunting a job in an architect's office."

Cast in character parts of earnest youths who were possessed of an ingenuous and sometimes alarming honesty,

naive idealism and zeal, James Stewart worked, or played, himself into being a Hollywood rage in two years' time. He was "the kid from Elm Street who rents a 'tux' to go to the Junior Prom," and caused a nation-wide flutter of feminine hearts. The young adored him; matrons felt like mothering him. In less than five years after his first arrival in Hollywood for his first movie contract, Stewart had moved to the top spot in films. In 1940, he was awarded his first Oscar, the Motion Picture Academy Award, for his acting in *The Philadelphia Story*.

Frank Capra, the astute director of Stewart's memorable film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, perceived that Stewart's idealism and honesty did not end with the screen. He really was that way—practicing in real life what he was preaching, as it were, on the screen.

Stewart studied himself carefully to learn just why he appealed so strongly to audiences. Studying what worked on the screen and what didn't, he learned how to get the results he was after, observing, "Acting is mostly a lot of tricks." Stewart's own studied tricks are underplaying, and a halting delivery.

In 1939, Jimmy took a vacation abroad between pictures. He spent a day in Bourges, France, trying to find the old ordnance shops of the American Expeditionary Forces, which his father, when a soldier, had helped to build in 1917. "I found them," he reported, "huge empty steel buildings hidden away in the woods outside the city. It was a funny thing, but no one in Bourges seemed to know about them. I asked dozens of people before I finally found an old woman who remembered them from twenty years ago."

Stewart returned in the autumn to fulfill his commit-

ments for four more pictures that would take almost a year. But he had felt the atmosphere of Europe, and remarked, "It looks now as though I'd be wearing a uniform." The Nazi-Germans had been bullying their neighbors with more and more frequency for several years, and September of 1939 found Europe again at war.

The actor thought it was only a question of time for America, and already in 1939 he began strengthening his own preparedness, to use his own phrase, by learning to fly. The boy who had made airplane models and given plays in the back yard had now become a professional actor who was serious about flying. He received his pilot's license that year. He also gave money to help finance the Southwest Airways Training School, and tried, wherever he could, to do his part in waking up his country to the Nazi menace. In the summer of 1940 he appeared in the rôle of an anti-Nazi student in *The Mortal Storm*. Gathering together a group of the most popular Hollywood actors and actresses, he flew them to Houston, Texas, to help a Texas committee raise money for Great Britain, then so gallantly resisting the German onslaught from the skies. Naturally, all Houston tried to buy admission to see the movie stars, and a large sum was collected for Britain's aid.

When his order came up in the draft, Stewart worked harder than ever to perfect his flying. Buying his own plane, he began flying with a Civil Aeronautics Administration inspector to qualify for a commercial pilot's license. By the time he reported to the Los Angeles draft board in February of 1941, he had 325 hours aloft to his credit. This was shortly after he had been voted the screen's outstanding actor for 1940.

The draft board, at first, put Stewart in limited military

service classification because he was ten pounds underweight. Then Jimmy began to stuff himself on starches. One early morning in March, he rolled out of bed at an hour when most of his movie colleagues were just rolling in, and proceeded to a street corner in Los Angeles, to join eighteen other young men. They boarded a trolley-car, for draft headquarters, where Stewart enlisted as a volunteer. The night before he had gone to bed early because the night before that, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had given him a send-off party. The thirty-two-year-old movie idol was dropping out of stardom at \$3,000 a week, to work as a private for Uncle Sam for \$21 a month.

Fame and success had never disturbed his equilibrium. He had retained his natural characteristics, and was as "unpretentiously genuine, simple, modest mannered" as he appeared on the screen.

In the Army, Stewart was much impressed by the Army's way of doing things. He enjoyed his experiences, and when he became a corporal, he wrote correspondence for a special news service about life in the Army Air Corps. He could not always write much because he was kept so busy doing things people kept telling him to do. In one letter he wrote, "I was wondering the other day if all the mothers and fathers all over the country who have boys who are cadet material realize how good this training is." After praising the way the Army taught flying to a boy, Corporal Jimmy added, "As he learns to fly the Army way, things slip into his character which will never leave him; things like alertness, and positiveness, and self-assurance, and courage."

Accustomed as he had been to Hollywood's large pay checks, Jimmy was nevertheless delighted by a raise in

Army pay after his initial \$21 a month. Telephoning to his parents in Pennsylvania, he reversed the charges from California because he was temporarily broke, but he was able to inform them that they now had a "swell first sergeant" in the family, and he thought army life was "just fine."

The following January, 1942, Stewart won his wings as an Air Corps bomber pilot, and became an instructor of pilots. But he wanted service overseas and, at his own request, he was sent over in 1943 and served as a Squadron Commander of B 24's based in England.

It was probably with an all-too-human feeling that his comrades-in-arms at first suspected him of being what they called a "glory pilot of the chair-borne glamour squad." But they soon learned otherwise. Jimmy Stewart had put Hollywood behind him for the duration. He stayed away from London's night clubs, where boys who had not seen as much "glamour" as he had, were mixing night clubbing with war. He would not even pose for a WAC recruiting film. His friends were fellow officers and crew members.

Then came contact with the enemy.

In 1943 Stewart was sent on his first combat missions over Germany: Kiel, Bremen, Ludwigshaven. The bomber he flew was named "Nine Yanks and a Jerk." He was moved up to Group Commander for the mission to Bonnières, France, in January, and to Wing Commander for the Frankfurt raid a week later. In March, 1944, less than four months after his first combat mission, he flew the lead plane in a saturation raid over Berlin.

After many successful missions, he was made Group Operations Officer. Then his job was to work out the tactics for the missions assigned to his group by the 80th Bomber Command. The order would come in the evening. Stewart

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would work all night plotting the best approach and escape routes, the points of rendezvous before and after the raids. Then he would give orders for arming the planes with the appropriate number and types of bombs required for the particular mission. Sometime before the chilly dawn he would brief the pilots and the crews. In a dim, map-walled room, he earnestly explained the details of the mission, and answered questions. How well he knew what these young men were facing—he had done it so often himself. At time for the take-off, his jeep carried him over the cold and misty ground to watch his planes depart for their deadly goals somewhere in the air over enemy country. One after the other, the great bombers slid away into the east, their steady hum rapidly diminishing as if the heroes at their assigned places within were all too eager to meet the fiery dawn.

Then Stewart would return to his quarters and try to get some sleep. A few hours later, he would be up again, anxiously watching the skies for the bombers to return, deeply grateful as one after another came sliding home, suffering heartache when some did not return. Gradually, under the strain, his brown hair began to show streaks of gray.

He earned a reputation in the 8th Air Force as one of the hardest-working and most efficient officers in the service. In July, 1944, he was made Lieutenant Colonel and named Chief of Staff of a Liberator Combat Wing, second in command to Brig. Gen. E. J. Timberlake, Jr. The following spring he became a full Colonel. In twenty-one months overseas, he flew 20 missions and won six battle stars. He had commanded, at times, as many as 1000 bombers.

Stewart's army career had been distinguished but any-

mous. He wanted it that way. Being a Hollywood glamour boy was one thing; the Army was another. He kept them separate. He gave no interviews while he was in the Army, and refused to be in any kind of picture.

Through it all, Stewart's luck held. He lived to tell the tale though it was a tale he did not like to tell. Four and a half years had dropped out of his career as an actor, but in those years he made another career, brilliant and distinguished, for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster and—some gray hairs.

The actor took up two new hobbies, golf and fishing. Before the war, flying had been his major hobby. He spent his Sundays going out to the airport to take his plane up for a ride. After the war nothing was deader than his interest in planes. He had had enough flying to last his lifetime. He said, "I don't think I'll ever get into a plane again. I rolled up 2000 hours overseas, and that'll just about do me."

Stewart's desire was to return to his acting at the same point where he had left it. Though he had dropped out of Hollywood when he was the idol of American movie audiences, he had lost nothing by doing so. His war record had won the great good will of the public. His fan mail was enormous. He was swamped with it. All this made him more anxious than ever not to let his public down. He would have worked seven days a week, and eighteen hours a day.

Frank Capra, his friend and director, had also worried lest they might both have lost their skill during their years of military service. But this was needless worry, as most worries are. They now worked together so easily that Capra would sometimes throw Stewart into scenes "raw," saying, "Make up your own dialogue as you go along. Just say

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whatever seems natural—the first thing that comes into your head.”

The actor had a dread of appearing to trade on his exploits as a flyer. When he signed a contract for his first film after the war, *It's a Wonderful Life*, in which his own idol, the old actor Lionel Barrymore appeared, Stewart insisted on the insertion of a clause in the contract forbidding the exploitation of his war record.

With all his great success, Stewart has never come to the place where he thinks he has learned everything about acting. No genuine artist ever feels that he has finished learning. With his droll humor, James Stewart has admitted that, “Once in a while I get to thinking I’m not so bad. In fact, I begin to think I’m pretty darn good. Then I go charging into a scene with Barrymore, and get my ears pinned back; the scene stolen right out of my hand. Then I wonder if, in arguing that I’ll be a whizz of an actor by eighty, I’m giving myself enough time.”

Stewart regards his profession very seriously, and wants to act as long as possible, improving always as he goes on. He is one actor who has no hankerings after other aspects of theatre work: He has no desire to produce his own pictures or to direct his own company.

The actor’s conversation is sprinkled with long pauses. He uses a direct style of speaking, unlike the usual Hollywood exaggeration, and eyes his listener thoughtfully. He likes privacy. One admirer observed that Stewart “wanders around his house showing it to guests with the air of a paid guide—only without the enthusiasm.” Those who know Hollywood, say that James Stewart is unlike most of the people there, because he puts on no act. He is always genuine Jimmy. He is not a joiner, and he dislikes banquets where

speakers talk for hours and say nothing. His manner is quiet, his dress conservative. Regretting that he does not read very much, he likes to have books around him just the same.

At Princeton's bicentennial celebration in 1947, James Stewart was awarded an honorary degree. The citation read: "James Maitland Stewart, Master of Arts. A graduate of Princeton who, whether in his chosen profession or in the grave business of war, has demonstrated ability, modesty, leadership, and above all, integrity, in a way which has warmed our hearts and stirred our pride in his achievements."

That same summer, Stewart returned to Broadway, appearing for four weeks in *Harvey*. He was then thirty-nine and so popular that his fans clustered on the sidewalks near his theatre in such numbers, eager to glimpse the man himself, that it was necessary to maintain a special police detail at the spot. There had been no crush like that to see a star in person since the days of the matinee idol, John Barrymore.

Stewart frankly admitted to a young interviewer that he didn't mind being asked for autographs. "I get a big boot out of having someone come up and say 'Hello, Jimmy.' Means they like me and are curious—curiosity is the great American habit. It makes a fellow feel good to know he's got so many friends." However, he did admit that autograph seekers had grown more demanding: "Used to be," he explained, "a signature was all they wanted. Now they expect 'To my pal from your pal, Broadway, July 31, 1947,' or 'To Maizie with the golden hair.' More people take pictures," he continued, "than ask for autographs. Somebody's always holding a camera less than a foot from my

nose. At first it was frightening " But Jimmy found even some advantage in that for, he said, it "keeps me smiling."

Stewart logically observes that the trials of the stars at their Hollywood opening nights are avoidable. "All you gotta do," he reasoned, "is to steer clear of first nights, and you won't be mobbed. If you don't want to be shoved and pushed, stay away. The show will be there the next night—if it isn't you won't miss much—then you can go and see it without any excitement."

Stewart does not like to see his own finished pictures, and often does not go to them at all. He says, "You just sit there and suffer. You see everything wrong that you've done, and it's too late to do anything about it." He does, however, study the "rushes," which are the pictures of the preceding day's work, usually viewed in the projection room. It is by studying these daily rushes that movie actors can analyse their work, and avoid acquiring mannerisms.

At forty, Stewart was still a bachelor, which is unusual for a denizen of Hollywood, and for an actor. He had never been in a hurry about marrying any more than he had been in a hurry about anything else. His eagerness to gain ten more pounds to satisfy Uncle Sam was about the only thing he had tried to push. Otherwise, he seems to take life easily as it unfolds, to use his own phrase, to his own gradual awakening. But he celebrated his forty-first birthday by proposing to a lady after a quiet dinner together, and he has at last become a family man with twin daughters.

MARIA TALLCHIEF

✧ *Ballerina* ✧

*M*ARIA TALLCHIEF, a ballerina of the New York City Ballet, is the daughter of an American whose ancestors were living on the American continent when Columbus opened the way for a migration of people which has never yet stopped. Tall Chief, an Indian of the Osage tribe, took the Christian names of Alexander Joseph for custom's convenience. His wife, of Scotch-Irish stock, and he were living on the Indian reservation at Fairfax, Oklahoma, in 1925 when their daughter Maria was born. Two years later, Maria had a baby sister, named Marjorie.

Tall Chief's land in Oklahoma was found to contain oil, and with an income which such rich land yields, he was able to give his daughters an education in music and the dance as these arts had been developed in Europe—not the wild, free music and dancing of the tribal Indians.

When Maria was five years old, her mother had her begin taking lessons in ballet dancing with a teacher from Tulsa who traveled around to nearby towns to give lessons. She was given piano lessons also, and then she was discovered to have absolute pitch.

In a short time, Maria's teacher had her dancing on the points of her toes. Then, of course, it soon followed that

people began to ask her to perform at various gatherings in the town, until the small child was called upon constantly. The ballerina can hardly remember, now, her first appearance before an audience, because it seems to her that she has always been dancing for an audience.

Very early she developed a regular routine of work and practice. She studied both piano and dancing seriously, though she always knew, she says, that she wanted the dance to be her first love.

Maria would get up every morning in time to practice an hour on the piano before she went to school. When school was over at three in the afternoon, she would go home for another hour's piano practice. After that, she would fill in the remainder of the day practicing her dancing. Having started so young acquiring definite work habits with constant practice, it became a routine she enjoyed. She would not have been happy spending her days otherwise.

Since the dancer's instrument of expression is his, or her, own body, the first essential is that the body must be kept flexible with constant practice, for only in this way can a technique be acquired and maintained.

When Maria was nine, and her young dancing sister, Marjorie, seven, the family moved to Los Angeles, and there Maria had a new teacher, Ernest Belcher. This teacher was of the opinion that the child had been put on the points of her toes too young, and he began her instruction all over again, in his own way. While she was going through this period of learning according to a different method of instruction, she was kept from public appearance. The dancer is now of the opinion that eight is about the right age to begin the study of ballet dancing.

After three years, Maria had a different teacher again,

and this time, at the age of twelve, she became a pupil of Madame Nijinska, sister of the famous Russian dancer Nijinsky. She was fifteen when her teacher gave a program with her pupils in the Hollywood Bowl. It was on that occasion that Maria Tallchief made her début as a classical dancer in a ballet to the music of the Chopin Piano Concerto in E minor. It just happened that, at the same time, she had been practicing the same concerto on the piano. She knew it well.

Though she had always felt that dancing was to be her métier, she was very sure of it after she had seen the Ballet Russe. The beauty and perfection of the performance inspired her to new efforts, and after she graduated from high school, she devoted all her time to the dance.

Her teacher, Madame Nijinska, had been training ballets for the Ballet Russe, and having prepared Maria, helped her forward in her career. Maria became an understudy for the ballerina who danced the Chopin Concerto ballet in the Ballet Russe. Not long afterward, she was invited to join the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo as a member of their Corps de Ballet. It was in this capacity, and no longer regarded as a mere student that she went to New York in 1942—still only seventeen.

The dancer considers this opportunity to have been her stroke of good luck, her "break." She would not have had this break, however, had she not worked and prepared herself for many long years while she was growing up, and acquired the ability and knowledge that was necessary.

Her marked progress brought her to the attention of the ballerina, Mia Slavenska, of the Ballet Russe, and Maria, as a member of the Corps de Ballet, was given an understudy. Then, should the ballerina be unable to perform,

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Maria could dance her part, and there was still the understudy to fill in for Maria's part. This was what happened when the ballerina became ill, and Maria first danced the ballerina's role in Philadelphia. She continued in it during the following season in New York. She remained with the Ballet Russe for five years.

In 1946, Maria Tallchief married the choreographer, George Balanchine, who was at the time working with the Ballet Russe. (Some time later this marriage came to an end.) But the next year, when her husband was invited as guest choreographer to stage three of his ballets for the Paris Opera Ballet, she danced the leading rôle in his *Baiser de la Fée*, and she was then the first American dancer to appear as a guest with the Paris Opera Ballet. It was a great success. Miss Tallchief loved the Paris Opera House, and she loved to dance there. The engagement was filled with work and practice, however, and she had little opportunity for sightseeing.

Returning to New York at the close of the Paris engagement, Maria Tallchief joined the New York City Ballet, for which her husband had become artistic director. She has been with this Company ever since. The New York City Ballet is a new young organization which, in a very few years, has come to the fore as a brilliant and highly successful group. Miss Tallchief, as its featured virtuoso, has contributed greatly to that success. The Company made its first trip abroad when invited by Covent Garden to appear in London for the summer season of 1950. They performed abroad again in 1952.

The daily schedule of a ballet dancer is very exacting. Miss Tallchief says it is work which is physically and mentally exhausting. As in all the arts, the artist is making a

constant effort to improve and arrive at perfection. The dancer is constantly thinking of steps, manners, interpretations, and of how she wishes to appear to the audience. For this last consideration, the dancer is constantly practicing before mirrors.

One ballet dancer, admitting that the necessity for thinking so much of one's own appearance leads to too much thought of self, likes to point out that the great Nijinsky thought of his mirrored reflection not as himself at all but only as the character whose part he was dancing.

With an 8:30 curtain, dancers are at the theatre by 6:00 or 6:30 to practice an hour before each performance. This is a warming-up period. As it is almost impossible for a dancer to practice in a city apartment, the student of ballet, and the professionals as well, must go each day to their practice rooms or studios. Miss Tallchief does not consider it a hard life, since the dancer is doing what he or she most loves to do. She still does certain elementary exercises which she was taught at the age of eight. They are to the ballet dancer what scales are to the pianist. And scales are a chore only to people who cannot play them. To the artist-player a controlled scale is a pure delight.

In spite of the hard work, a dancer's pay is not high. Moreover, the dancer's working years are short because the human body must be at its most flexible condition, and this condition does not extend through the years of middle age. Some dancers become choreographers who design ballets and dance routines. Others become teachers. Ballet dancers who are in big time in their profession agree that it is a life which young people should not decide to enter unless the desire for it is so strong that they feel that no other work will satisfy them.

Nora Kaye, another made-in-America ballerina, having been born in New York City, says, "You have to feel that it is a religion with you, otherwise nothing would compensate for the time and work that must be spent on it."

Maria Tallchief says the dancer's world is a small one because one's friends are all dancers with whom one comes naturally in contact, and if one does have friends outside the dance world, it is hard to keep up such friendships for there is no time left.

The dancer's worst trouble is being asked to dance on bad floors. Maria Tallchief has even had to dance on floors which had small holes in them. The places where ballet dancers can do their best performances are not numerous, for they require a roomy stage and smooth floor. Miss Tallchief thinks that television, with its special technique for shooting, will become a great medium for ballet.

Maria's sister Marjorie is a ballerina with the Marquis de Cuevas Company, which has been performing in Europe. These are probably the greatest artists in big time who have come out of Fairfax, Oklahoma. Their home town is naturally proud of them, and Fairfax has celebrated a "Maria Tallchief Day."

A dancer is in love with dancing; a musician is in love with music; a singer is in love with singing; an actor is in love with acting. Some of these artists are in love with audiences. It is all hard work, and none of them ever thought of stopping with an eight-hour day and a forty-hour week.

FRED ASTAIRE

✧ *Dancer—American Style* ✧

IN THE early 1900's, Mrs. Austerlitz, the wife of a brewery salesman in Omaha, Nebraska, started to send her little girl Adele to dancing class. Since the mother was sure her daughter was a born dancer, the child must have shown some early aptitude, and apparently from the start she made progress rapid enough to hint at what she later might become.

There was one other member of the family—a little boy named Fred, a year and a half younger than Adele. While he was growing up, it seemed to him that playing professional baseball was about as fine a career as an American boy could have. To be America's greatest second baseman was his first idea of life's supreme goal. Things did not turn out that way, but he did in time achieve a goal of quite a different kind.

When he was old enough, Fred began to tag along with his sister to dancing class. Being so near of an age, they were company for each other and, besides, staying home was much duller than going to dancing class, where he could watch what went on. Before long, it seemed the natural thing to join the dancing class himself, since he was there anyway. That was how his dancing instruction began.

The two little Austerlitzes, whose stage name was to be Astaire, must have been born with a perfect rhythmic sense and perfect co-ordination. It was easy for them to make their feet, legs, arms, and hands do what they wanted them to do.

Young Fred was not only smart in his legs, he was smart in his head, too. He taught himself to read the words in his sister's primer before he was six. Apparently he could do this before he could always talk straight, for upon being asked how he learned, he replied, "I 'tudied."

The boy was only five when he began to dance in public with his sister. They made a charming pair, were much admired, and soon became known in school and parish performances in Omaha, though Fred was always referred to as "that talented Austerlitz girl's little brother." In a children's performance of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, when Fred was seven, he had to play the part of Roxane, because Adele, who was taller, made a better *Cyrano*.

That year, Nebraska decided to have prohibition and the brewery closed down. Fred's father was out of a job. Wondering what they could do, Mrs. Austerlitz suggested, "Adele is a born dancer, and Fred might not be too bad. Why not give them a chance to develop their talents?" The youngsters really could dance exceptionally well, and the family needed money. Fred and Adele began to dance at charity concerts, private parties, and wherever they could obtain engagements. One day, a vaudeville manager saw them, liked their work, and sent them out on the road, to dance their way through "tank towns." Before the days of automobiles and buses, when people went everywhere on railroad cars, "tank towns" was a term used by show people for towns so small they had no railroad stations but only

water tanks, where the steam engines could stop for water. That was how seven-year-old Fred and his sister began their careers as a sister-and-brother dancing team in vaudeville. Fred has since said that he didn't remember anybody pointing him out as a dancing prodigy but he could hardly have started out on his career much younger! In fact, they were so very young that their manager had to confine the children to small towns and the smaller cities. In the larger ones, ever-watchful children's societies forbade their performances. They were considered too young for such a life.

During the next few years, Fred attended public school when he could, but, starting on a dancing career so young, he never had time or opportunity for much conventional education. Whenever a chance for an engagement came along, that had to be the first consideration. Mrs. Austerlitz, however, was conscientious about teaching her children herself. Not only did she teach them, she was their promoter, manager, and chaperone for about twenty years, going with them wherever their work took them.

Fred studied with several dancing masters in Omaha, and later in New York, but he never stayed long with any one teacher. He was always teaching himself. While still a boy, he began to make up his own dance steps. He would decide upon a routine, master it himself, and then teach it to his sister.

He was only twelve when the Fred and Adele dancing act was seen in New York for the first time, but again they fell afoul of the child labor law and had to withdraw from America's entertainment center. For about four years then, until Fred was old enough and big enough, the pair had to give all their public performances outside of the big city, though they were already professionals.

At one period, when Adele was so much taller than Fred that they looked silly dancing together, they stopped dancing for a year and went to school at Highwood, New Jersey. Though they were already ballet artists, Mrs. Austerlitz also placed them in Ned Wayburn's new Dancing, Singing, and Dramatic School, off Times Square. When Fred's growth caught up to Adele's, they returned to vaudeville in a revised act, "Fred and Adele Astaire in New Songs and Smart Dances," which the young boy had made up himself.

They went through hard times, serious times, and homesick times. Even when they worked their way to bigger cities, their path was not all rosy. Fred wore a fifteen-dollar suit for years, both on and off stage. When he got the chance, he would double on the bill by dancing an extra heel-and-toe act himself, to bring in more money.

Even in "small time"—a term used in show business to mean working in the smaller theatres and towns for small pay—Fred and Adele seemed to be always finding themselves in the least desirable spot in the show, opening the bill. They were very young and they may have been imposed upon. Still, for nightly performances, it was well to have them do their act early, first on the program, and not have to stay up so late, though Fred was an old hand at doing five-a-day turns before he wore long pants.

In the old vaudeville, a type of variety entertainment popular before the cheaper movies came along—the first movie houses which charged five cents admission, were often called nickelodeons—the show was made up of several unrelated acts. The first number was always the least important, for it came on when late-comers were finding their seats. The best acts were saved until the end, so that the audience left the theatre with the best part of the show

in their minds. A program might begin with the sister-and-brother dancing act; the second act might be a singing comedian, or an animal act; the third a magician; the fourth clowns, a slight dramatic skit, or musicians such as Jerry and her Baby Grands; and the fifth a troupe of Japanese tumblers, or acrobats, ending with a big tableau or spectacle.

Later, recalling these years, Fred tried to make the story sound better. "Once," he said, "we did have a better position. Next to closing."

"Yes," explained Adele, like a sister, "but there were only two acts on the bill! The other was a dog act!"

"Uh-huh," agreed Fred. "And we had to climb a ladder and dress in a loft. The dogs couldn't climb a ladder, so they got the star's dressing room."

The brother-and-sister act was gay and lively. They were young, happy, full of fun, and their dancing was exuberant. While watching them, people were always smiling. Adele was her brother's partner as a comedienne too, as well as in the dance.

Fred was seventeen when the pair were considered mature enough to make a tour of the United States and Canada in vaudeville. The next year, appearing in New York as full-fledged professionals, no longer children, they were acclaimed as the most talented young dancers who had ever graced the vaudeville stage. People called them adorable. But they had worked the Broadway circuit and toured many years before they were noticed by Shubert scouts, who offered them their first big contract.

Then Fred and Adele appeared in a patriotic medley called *Over the Top*, starring Ed Wynn, and after this they never went back to vaudeville again. Indeed vaudeville itself was soon to vanish.

They had now reached big time. Broadway gave them a

chance at last, and a chance was all they needed. Though they were just about to enter their twenties, years and years of experience were behind them. Over the Top put them over.

Their rhythmic comedy was adroit, smooth and graceful, their teamwork fluid and precise, and they went together like peaches and cream.

From this time on, there was always a place in a Broadway musical show for this enchanting pair. They danced in *The Passing Show* of 1918, at the old Winter Garden, then in Fritz Kreisler's entrancing *Apple Blossoms*.

With the beginning of great success in big time show business, Fred and Adele became social favorites. Invited to parties, and making associations and friends in society, they played on Park Avenue, though they worked on Broadway. That Fred's manner was distinctly a cut above what might have been expected from his having spent his impressionable and growing years in small time vaudeville, can be seen from the fact that when New Yorkers noticed him, they thought he was English. Later, when he went to Hollywood, they thought he was French.

By the time Fred was twenty he was already an old trouper. Though Adele and Fred were still young when New York bestowed its approval upon them, it was obvious that the pair were seasoned and experienced artists on the stage. Fred remarked years afterward, "It was only by going through dismal disappointments for twenty years, by working in vaudeville, night clubs, anywhere I could, and by learning to dance, that I ever got ahead."

His success did not mean that he could now sit back and take it easy. He worked as hard as ever, perhaps harder. He was the kind who was not easily satisfied with himself;

he was always looking for a way to improve. "I went through ballet school," he said, "when I was a very little kid. Then I taught myself the rest by doing exercises and by dancing and acting anywhere and anytime I could get a chance." Experience was his true and constant teacher. His words can be taken as encouragement to students who are too easily discouraged.

So far, Fred Astaire had had no speaking parts. He was, as he called himself, purely a "hoofer," though a hoofer of distinction. Speaking rôles and stardom came in 1922, when the irresistible pair appeared in *For Goodness' Sake*, a show written expressly for them. Through the 1920's, Fred and Adele danced in a succession of some of the best musical shows Broadway had ever seen: *The Bunch and Judy*, *Lady Be Good*, *Funny Face*, some with music by a young American composer named George Gershwin. Fred nicknamed his sister, *Funny Face*.

By nature modest and self-effacing, Fred, as choreographer, had always devised dances which made his sister appear the virtuoso of the team. She was the *prima*, he the *secondo*. Now that they were in big time, Fred worked harder than ever, inventing and trying out new routines and teaching them to Adele. Sometimes he wanted more rehearsals at midnight—after the show. Often, he would arrive at the theatre two hours early to limber up. But not Adele. She was beginning to want a different kind of life, something more like other girls had. For her, the theatre was work, she wanted time for fun and friends.

These shows of the 1920's made the Astaires international celebrities. When the shows were taken to England, London adored the sister-brother dancers. Titled and even royal circles began to include them in after-theatre parties

and week ends. Notables of the British theatrical and literary world, such as Shaw, Barrie, Galsworthy, and Walpole, expressed their admiration of the skill of these gay young Americans. The staid *London Times* wrote: "Columbus may have danced with joy at discovering America, but how he would have cavorted had he also discovered Adele and Fred Astaire!" In New York, they had become a vogue, rating as having "class appeal." This meant that when a show could boast of presenting Fred and Adele Astaire, the most seasoned and sophisticated theatre-goers clamored for tickets.

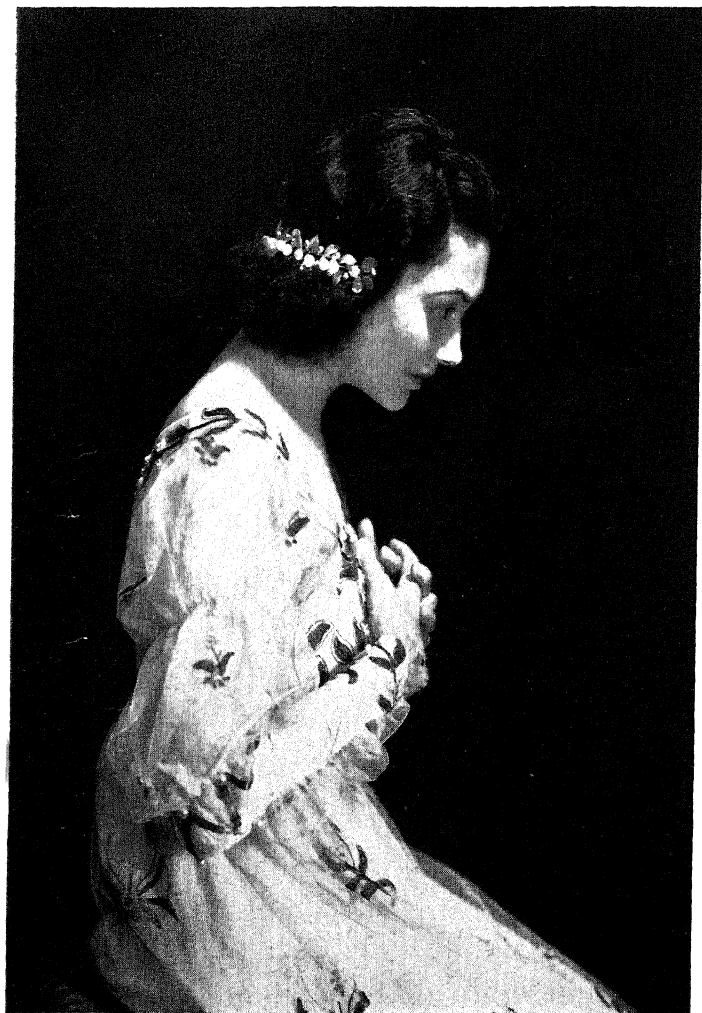
When, in *The Band Wagon*, Fred revealed new talents as a comedian, producers began to give him a series of character parts. He sang for the first time, after reaching big time, in this show. It saved money for the producers to have a dancer double as a singer and it also made more money for Fred.

Though the sister and brother connection had been very appealing when the Astaires were children, it was no longer a special attraction. Their talents were enough. Fred had been lucky to have "that talented Austerlitz girl" for a partner during the twenty-five first and hardest years. In 1931 Adele, with her brother's blessing, married Lord Cavendish, son of the wealthy Duke of Devonshire. Leaving the nightly grind of the stage, she went to live in Castle Lismore in North Ireland, a fantastically beautiful dream in stone, with two hundred rooms and—so it was said—one bath.

Fred, who went on dancing, had to look around for a new partner for his rough-and-tumble run-arounds, the kind of thing he and his sister did so charmingly. Claire Luce (the actress) became his first partner in *Gay Divorcée*. When this had a successful run of two straight sea-

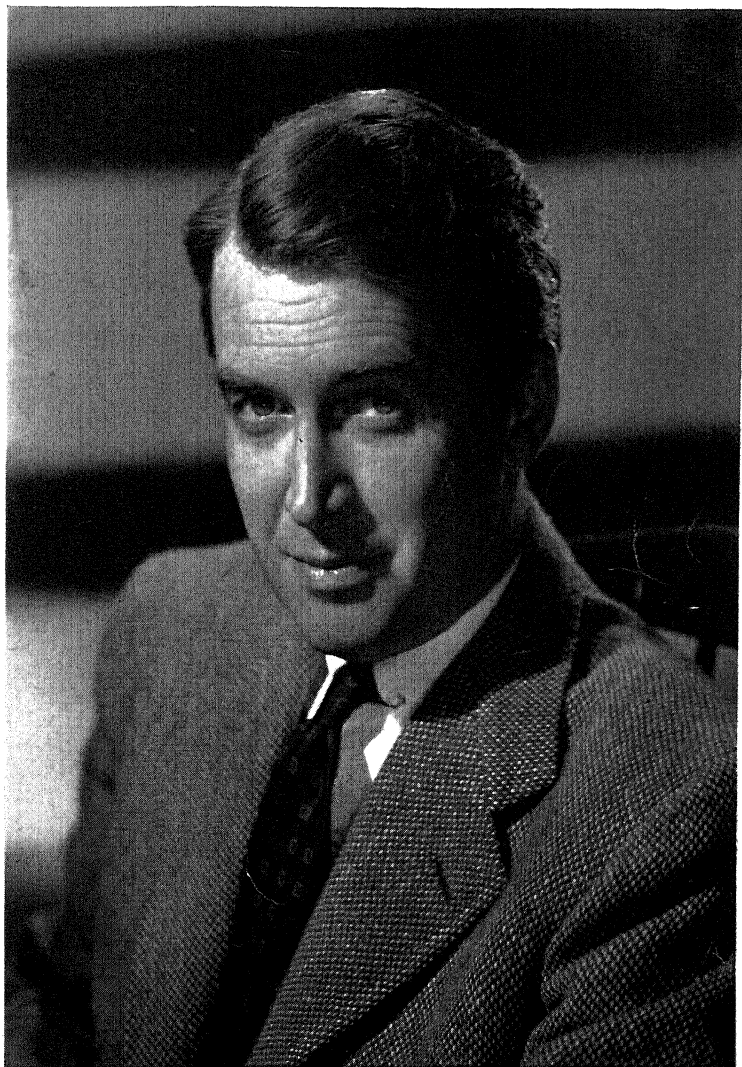
Photographs

1. KATHARINE CORNELL
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3. MARIA TALLCHIEF
4. FRED ASTAIRE
5. ALBERT WHITE
6. EMMET KELLY
7. JOHN MULHOLLAND
8. MARIAN ANDERSON
9. BING CROSBY
10. HILDEGARDE
11. BURL IVES
12. PATRICE MUNSEL
13. EUGENE LIST
14. YEHUDI MENUHIN

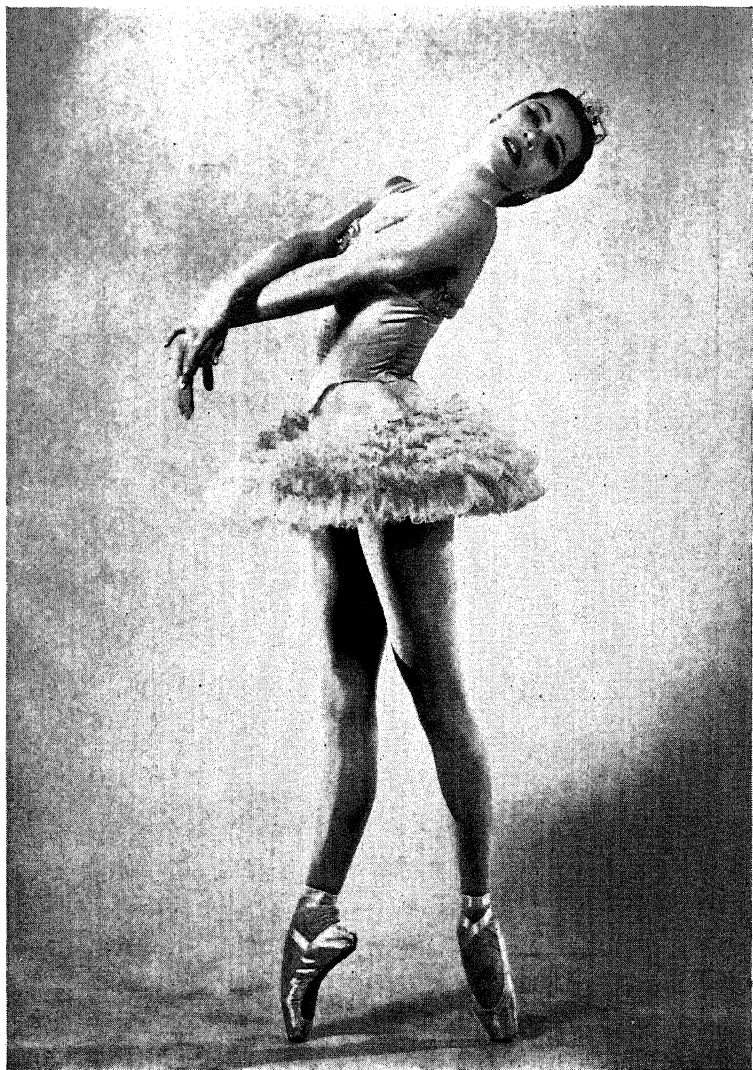


VANDAMA

KATHARINE CORNELL
as *Juliet*

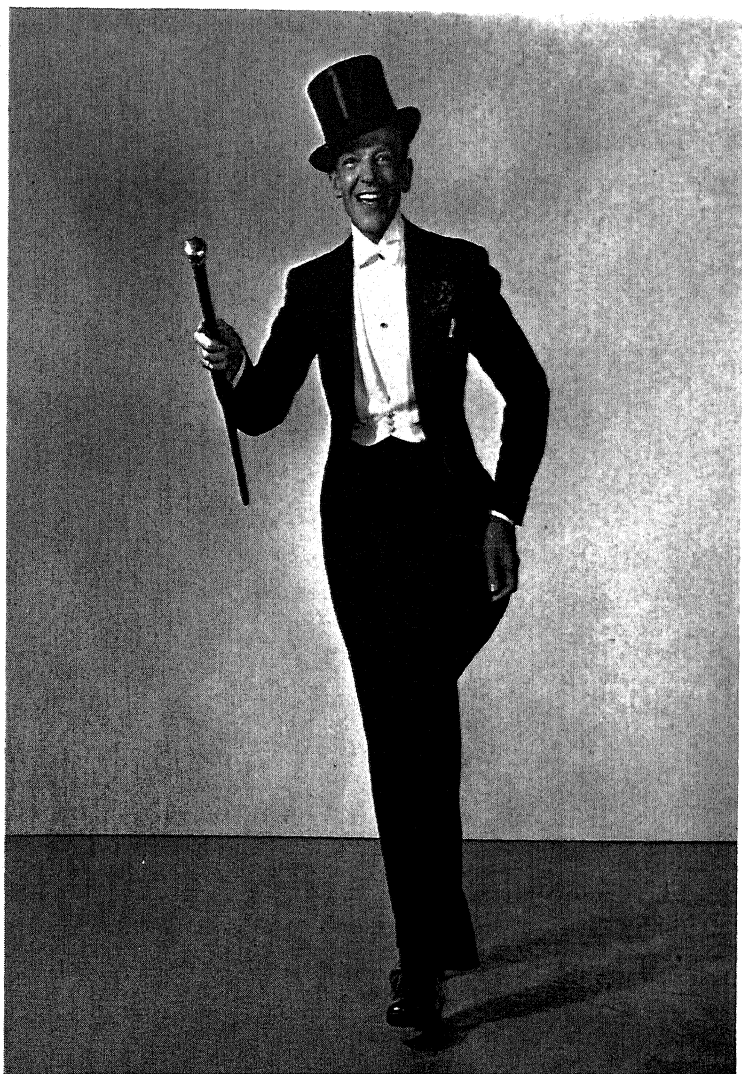


JAMES STEWART

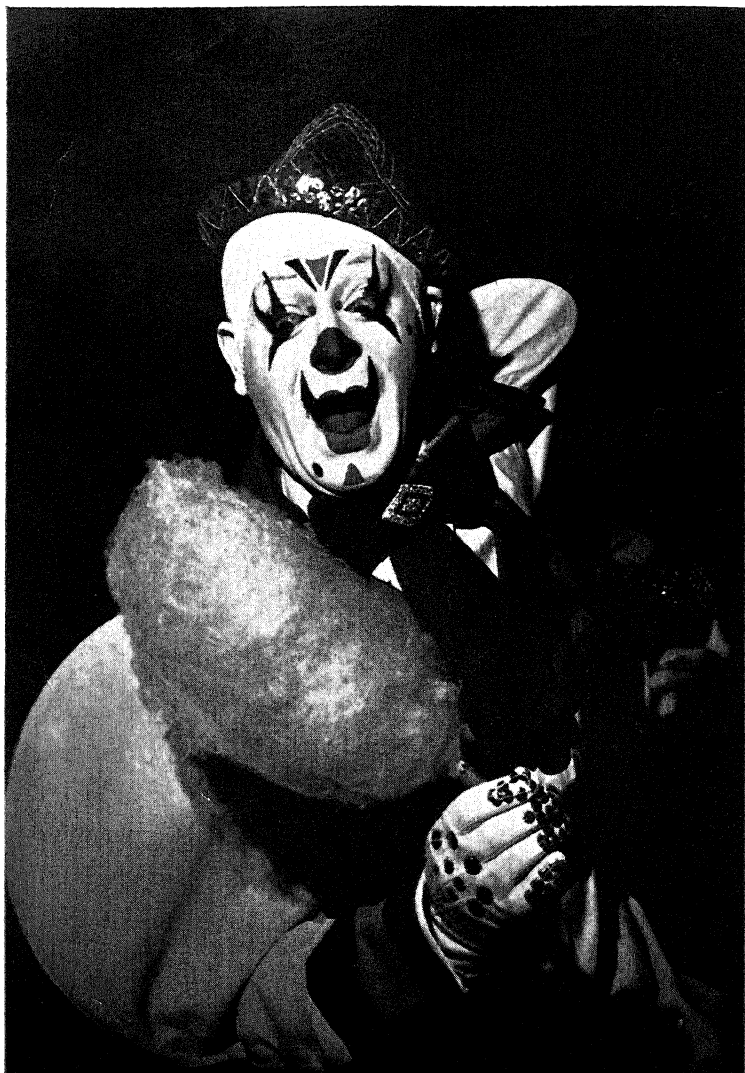


WALTER E. OWEN

MARIA TALLCHIEF



FRED ASTAIRE



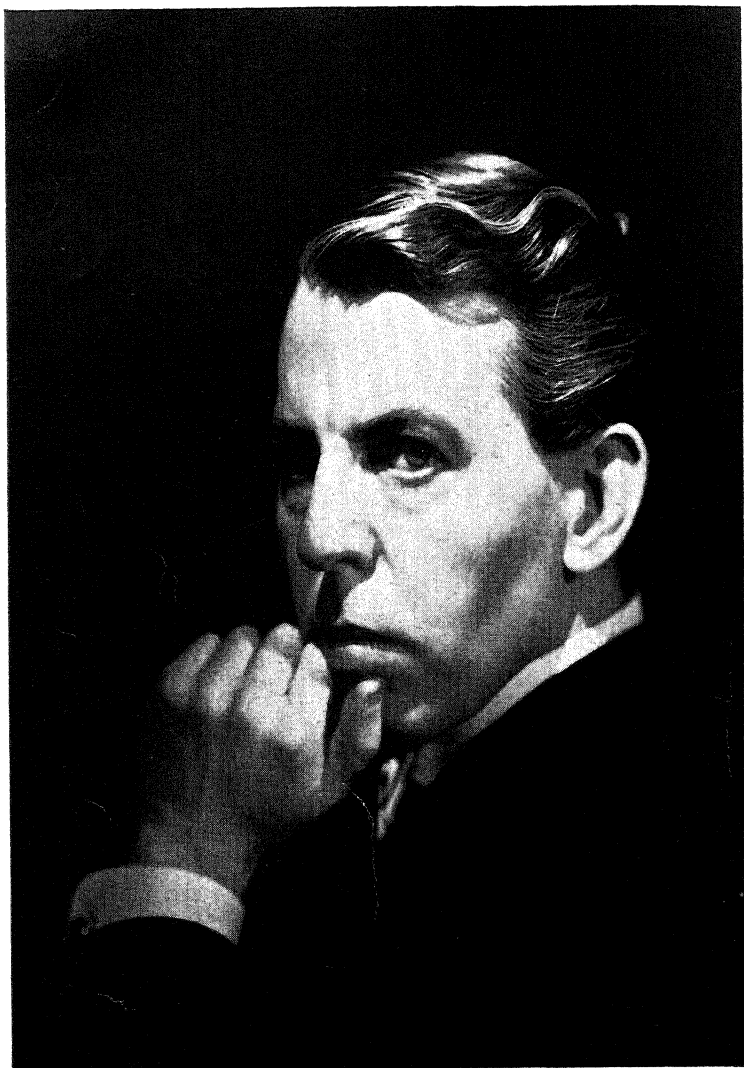
RINGLING BROTHERS

ALBERT WHITE



ACME

EMMET KELLY



JOHN MULHOLLAND



MARIAN ANDERSON



BING CROSBY



HILDEGARDE



BURL IVES



JOHN E. REED

PATRICE MUNSEL



EUGENE LIST



YEHUDI MENUHIN

sons, Fred received a nibble from Hollywood by way of RKO.

It is amusing to read now that his first screen test, as reported by an underling, said: "Can't act. Slightly bald. Can dance a little."

In 1933, the year he went to Hollywood, Mr. Astaire married a Boston society girl. An old Boston friend, recalling the early Fred and Adele dancing pair, said, "In those days, they knew the waterfront nickelodeons of Atlantic Avenue as well as they now know the mansions of Back Bay."

At first, Fred Astaire was rather reluctant about attempting to dance for the screen. He thought dancing could never become popular in pictures. At this time pictures were in black and white; color movies had not yet been developed. The dancing would have to be incidental to the picture, he thought, and he would have to figure more as a comedian and actor. His first dance number with Ginger Rogers, however, showed him that dancing could be projected as well upon the screen as on the stage. After more experience in dancing for the eye of the camera, Mr. Astaire found that the screen even had certain advantages over the stage. The audience, for instance, could follow intricate steps that might be lost to them behind the footlights, and each spectator could see the dance from the same perspective. Though he discovered that the technique of movie acting was very different from that for the stage, he came to believe that movie technique was a help to the dancer. A good actor can cover a slip in stage routine, but the camera catches any slip-up. On the other hand, in the movies the routine can be repeated if the first shooting is not satisfactory.

After three years, Astaire found his dancing even more

popular in the movies than it had been on the stage. When an Astaire film was announced, people flocked to see it. No one was more surprised and amazed than he at his quick success and rise to fame in the films. After two pictures with Ginger Rogers as his dancing partner, RKO signed him up for a period of years to appear exclusively in pictures, and they insured his legs for a million dollars.

It was due to his great popularity that ballroom dancing was revived in the 1930's. Everybody wanted to dance. Schoolboys throughout the country yearned to do tap steps, and practiced tapping on the linoleum floors in their mothers' kitchens.

Fred Astaire changed the ideas and the ways of shooting dancing pictures that were being used at the time he entered filmdom. He tabooed the former "trick" angles, which destroyed the continuity and flow of the dance, as many of them showed just the feet in action. He insisted on running a dance straight through, and keeping the full figure of the dancer or dancers in view, thus retaining the flow of movement intact. He felt that in every kind of dancing, even tap, the movement of the upper part of the body is as important as that of the legs. In planning his angles for the camera to shoot the dance, he kept in mind the idea that the audience should never be made aware of the camera. He placed the camera approximately at eye level that it might shoot the dance as nearly "straight-on" as possible.

Starting on a new picture, Astaire could never tell what his first approach would be. Sometimes he derived his inspiration from the story, sometimes from the character. Another time, the music would suggest a dance routine. Generally the story was planned first, and dances were

built around it, or fitted into it. But he still has to hear the music before he gets the inspiration for the actual steps.

Hollywood was amazed, not only at the artistic integrity of the former vaudeville and Broadway hoofer, but also at his great capacity for work. He was tireless at rehearsals.

By 1941, Fred Astaire was the best known and highest paid dancer in the world. Entering Hollywood only as a dancer, he had become one of its finest light comedians. His technique was perfect. He himself regarded it as a kind of instinctive knowledge, derived from the experience he had been absorbing since childhood.

Fred Astaire has been called the greatest exponent of America's own dance form. For the tap dance is as distinctive a part of the folk art of the United States as the cowboy ballad, Negro Spiritual, and swing. Modern ballroom dancing derived from the aristocratic dances of Renaissance Europe; square dances from the British Isles; but tap dancing sprang from the very soil of the United States. The first tap steps were the capers of the Negro slaves in joyful mood. The American Negro slave was not always sad and weary, by any means. No one could dance and sing with more gay abandon than he.

The first footwork of the Negro slaves was the simple heel-thumping of their tribal ancestors in the African jungles. Theirs were the basic rhythms of American jazz. Their body movements were loose, shambling, and funny. Sometimes they danced in shoes, sometimes with bare feet. The character of the "Negro buck dance" with its vainglorious strut, contrasted with a completely relaxed, free body, was always amusing. Some dancers could make their whole bodies, as well as their motions, appear as fluid as if they

were without joints. Plantation owners called this curious, gay performance of their slaves "levee dancing."

It was by copying such happy capers as he had seen danced on the Mississippi levees, that Dan Rice became the first of the Negro impersonators, or minstrel men, with his "Jim Crow" dance. Another popular entertainer was Zip Coon, and these two introduced levee dancing to the professional stage in American music halls around 1840. Blackface minstrels had begun to appear in the music halls, it is said, as early as 1800, but with Dan Rice's appearance their popularity grew. It was by way of these two men that the terms "coon" and "Jim Crow" entered into American slang.

About the time Rice and Zip Coon flourished in our country, clog dancing was growing popular in Ireland and England. Barney Williams was the first Irish clogger to come to the United States. He came in 1840. The Irish and Lancastershire clog was more stylized and complicated than the levee dancing, though its straight 6-8 rhythm was less subtle. The Negro levee dancer tapped his feet in simple common time, but his rhythms were the broken, restless, syncopated rhythms we hear in modern jazz—the music used for tap. The clogger danced only from the knees down with body stiff and straight in military attitude with chest out and his rigid arms pressed against his sides. He wore tights and heavy shoes with wooden soles. His dancing was judged by hearing his dance, that is, by the foot-work only.

Carried to ridiculous lengths by dancers looking for something new, the clog began to be performed on a small platform only two feet square and was called a "pedestal dance." In rural America, the clog became popular toward

the latter part of the 19th century, and for a few decades the two dance types flourished together. As early as 1866, the first extravaganza, entitled *The Black Crook*, featured both clog and minstrel dancers.

By the turn of the century, when Fred Astaire was born, the static clog dance was gradually disappearing from the American stage. Its heel-and-toe technique was taken over by the minstrel dancers and adapted to native rhythms, while Negro dancing provided the inspiration.

Rhythms and dance routines gradually became more varied. Footwork developed into complicated patterns. Terminology changed. "Levee dancing" was heard of no more, as was natural, after the Civil War. But the terms "step dance," "buck-and-wing" and "soft shoe," entered the vocabulary. Female clog dancers had appeared, but the minstrel blackface hoofer was always a man.

In 1902-03, however, the New York Theatre Roof offered a novelty called "Ned Wayburn's Minstrel Misses." The faces of his chorus were blacked with burnt cork and their dances combined the minstrel steps with graceful feminine gestures. Ned Wayburn called this hybrid form, "tap and step dancing." This was the first use of the term "tap."

Though the old blackface minstrel shows were now vanishing, their dances were still being used and embellished. The success of two popular actresses, Marilyn Miller and Ann Pennington, gave the tap dance an added vogue. College boys and social "sets," from slim debutantes to plump matrons, began to try to learn it in Ned Wayburn's elegant dance salons in New York and Chicago. Everybody was doing it.

It was Fred Astaire who brought the tap dance to its

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highest point of refinement, elegance, and virtuosity. The modern tap dance had evolved in the first twenty years of this century, and these were also Fred Astaire's first twenty years on the stage. He grew up at just the right time. As Fred's technique was developing, the old American rustic dance was changing color as well as class. Black cork disappeared in favor of white tie and tails. During the same decade, American ragtime changed into jazz, into swing, and "boogie-woogie," which began to impress serious composers. Finally, to the wonder of many people, it made its bow in concert halls where only classical music had reigned before. The great leveling-off process that has appeared in all society, as well as in literature and the arts, got under way and has steadily marched onward these first fifty years of our century. Nowadays, extremes are not so far apart. The middle ground is broader.

Fred Astaire was the first tap dancer to employ arms, hands, and body, consciously, for ornamentation in his type of dancing. With perfect footwork, he dances with his entire body, decorating his tap steps with many of the ideas he learned in the classical ballet which he studied as a small boy. He has never danced to classical music, always using American rhythms exclusively, with an air of gay spontaneity and exultation that reflect the folk origin of his dance. His air of blythe amusement imparted to the tap dance an elegance and ease the old stiff cloggers never imagined.

Mr. Astaire says it takes years to become a dancer. He believes in the necessity of studying different kinds of dancing, that "one alone is not enough." He is convinced that the study of ballet is a sure foundation for all forms, since "it teaches you what to do with your hands and arms."

Though Astaire has always worried lest he should run out of dance concepts, it has never happened. But he has been known to interrupt golf games and week-end trips to hurry back to his studio to work out an idea. Those who work with him find him easy and agreeable, a "shy and sensitive gentleman." He dislikes going to night clubs, because he is made uncomfortable by the kind of people who seem to think approval can only be expressed by a slap on the back, or by calling out one's first name. Previews of his own pictures cause him immense anguish. The spotlight he knew of old, but he found the limelight could be an imposition.

His dancing shoes are made especially for him. He likes them light in weight and a snug fit. One pair lasts for about six shooting sessions in the studios. He keeps seventy to a hundred pairs at hand, trusting no one but himself to put the aluminum tips on the heels and toes. His one superstition is an old red and green bathrobe he bought in Bridgeport, Connecticut, one day in 1922, when his performance was so brilliant it stopped the show. The modest young man could not think what made this happen unless it was the new bathrobe, which had brought him luck! Ever afterward, he wore the bathrobe on the day of an opening night, or on the first days of screening a new film.

Astaire's first partner, his sister Adele, as Lady Cavendish, watched her younger brother dance from one success to another. When she first saw her brother Freddy in pictures, she cried. What a rush of reminiscence, glancing back over all the years since she and Freddy had first learned to take a bow, and all those years, growing up, dancing together on the stage and dancing off—always dancing.

Mr. Astaire warns young dancers not to be discouraged with "an awful lot of setbacks," for unless they are willing to take them and keep on plugging, they will never arrive at the point where they will achieve recognition. In common with most career stories, the story of Fred Astaire shows that even to possess great talent and natural gifts is not enough. Persistence is required and courage to push onward, always working to improve.

Though the little Austerlitz boy never got to be a second baseman, he made thousands of other boys wish they could dance as well as he. One other Hollywood star, whose reputation is as big as Astaire's, has said he'd give anything to dance as well. That was Astaire's friend, Bing Crosby.

CLOWNS

✧ *The Darlings of the Circus* ✧

THE art of clowning is an ancient art, whose tradition traces back to Greek rustics who, long before the time of Christ, smeared their faces with wine lees and pranced, cavorted, and sang at the feasts of Dionysius. From their improvised gestures and songs, Greek comedy developed. Later, the peasants of Naples and Tuscany, carrying on a similar tradition, substituted masks for wine lees. Later still, the *Commedia dell' Arte* became an improvised comedy of Masks. One of its descendants was the little *Punch and Judy* show, with popular clown figures, which, traveling by horse-drawn carts, visited the villages and towns of Europe through generation after generation. Shakespeare used the clown character many times in his plays under the names of jester, fool, and Merry Andrew.

In the modern entertainment world there are comedians of all kinds, including some clowns who are clowns without clown attire. Some of these are funny to some people, perhaps not so funny to others.

The one prankster who always causes spontaneous laughter everywhere, is the circus clown, who exaggerates the natural emotions of children. Children understand him instantly and shout with glee when he appears. To

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grownups, he seems to step out of the past, bringing fond recollections of long-vanished summer days when the circus came to town.

The clown knows that tears and laughter are next-door neighbors. He knows that if he is slapped by a ten-foot plank, stumbles into a tank of water, has his false head knocked off, or is embarrassed by losing his pants in front of all those people, his young audience will find his dismay over his pretend troubles screamingly funny. Though the grownup has probably progressed a bit farther in his ideas of humor, still clowning brings back memories of enraptured moments when he, too, was young. When the first sight of the clowns brings a burst of children's squealing laughter, it may bring, to the grownup, a feeling of tenderness such as nothing else in the circus can—tenderness for youth, that strange tenderness of the funny bone, which makes you unsure whether to laugh or cry, so that you laugh, while tears spring to your eyes. This gives the clown his appeal to everyone, young and old alike.

No circus is complete without him. Circus performances have been produced without such basic ingredients as bare-back riders and elephants, but no big circus manager would ever dare present a performance without clowns. They are the spirit of the circus.

Let us see how the modern clown lives, and how he plans his "spontaneous" humor. The Greatest Show on Earth—Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus—remains in winter quarters in Sarasota, Florida, planning the show for the coming season, until the first hint of spring is in the northern air. Then, with an amazing order and organization, the huge outfit of humans, animals, and properties, prepares for its annual trek over all the United

States, peddling its fun, its wonders, and its thrills, till winter comes again.

Moving such a great conglomeration would be chaos, were it not that everything is carefully planned to be placed, at each stop, in an exact position in relation to other properties, so that the constant setting up and dismantling of the great circus proceeds swiftly and in order.

In this organization, Clown Alley has a definite place of its own. It is to be found under the edge of the Big Top at the rear. Giant trucks, which are the clowns' homes and their dressing rooms, too, while on tour, are run in under the big canvas. Each one has its designated place. Their tops fold down, the rears are removed, and little steps lead from these dressing rooms to the ground. The part of the audience at the far end of the circus oval on the highest rows, is sitting on top of the clowns' dressing rooms, with only a canvas wall between.

For an hour or so before the afternoon performance, all the clowns are busy getting into their costumes and making up their exotic faces. It is a complex task, for, like many another art, clowning is not by any means so easy as it looks. Walking along Clown Alley of a warm summer afternoon—if one can be so fortunate—one sees them painting their faces in front of little mirrors. They sit on trunks or stools or cots, amid an array that looks almost like that in any other actor's dressing room: portable clothes racks, costumes, wigs trunks, wires and lights, paints and brushes, towels, and water buckets. Naturally they do not have running water in such dressing rooms. Instead, each clown has his own two water buckets—one for hot, one for cold—with his name painted on the outside. On the ground a few feet away are fifteen or twenty more

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water buckets, instantly available, and bearing such entrancing names as:

PRINCE PAUL	JEROME
LITTLE JIMMIE	ORTON
JACKIE	COFFEE JOE
CHESTY	

There are two general types of clowns: The traditional white-face, who has been grinning at amusement seekers for hundreds and hundreds of years. He is the classical clown of French and Italian ancestry, who is the same under many names: Pierrot, Harlequin, Scaramouche, Pagliacci, Punchinello.

Traditionally, these clowns have white faces, now made up with zinc oxide grease paint over which white powder is dusted. Black and red colors, also required by tradition, are used for the distinctive designs of fantastic lips, eyebrows, wrinkles, and beauty spots. A clown invents his own face, adopting a certain make-up by which he is identified. It is his trademark, and there is a kind of moral copyright on a face. No clown would think of stealing another's design. This traditional type of clown wears a one- or two-piece white costume.

Then there is the character clown, who embraces many types. Clown policemen are always popular, and the rustic hayseed and female impersonators are ever present among the gaudy motley, as well as that purely American invention—the hobo clown.

A third kind, classed as the grotesque, combines the white make-up with character studies. There was a time when racial types were vastly enjoyed—Irish and Swedish comics, the French comique, the German Broad Face—but they have mostly disappeared. Always with us, how-

ever. is the *auguste* as the French say, or the fall guy—he who gets slapped. In company with his tormentor, the sadistic clown who spends his whole time delighting in worrying him, the poor *auguste* seems unable to tear himself away. He keeps hanging around for more punishment. He never knows when he has had enough. This pair fit each other like hand and glove.

The French people are exceedingly fond of their clowns, and they too, have their *buffoons*, *fantaisistes*, *lunatiques*, *arlequins*, and their *bourgeois prudhommesques*, though the tramp comic with his booze-red nose and battered hat is said to be purely American.

These fun-makers emerge from their dressing rooms, as opening time draws near, and move toward the rear opening of the big tent, where a great and wonderful array of hundreds of performers are lining up—man and animal, and the latter both tame and wild—to enter the circus arena for the Grand March. As we have been watching the clowns making up, we now follow them toward the gaudy off-stage scene, which is like nothing else on earth. The elephants have been slowly steered into place to lead the parade. Judging from the rumbling buzz and din from within, with its running obbligato of the shouts of hawkers, the seats have filled up with hundreds of people who have come and paid their admission for two hours or more of noise, nonsense, fun, thrills, and laughs.

Suddenly, from inside, the band blares, and the elephants, fantastic floats, beautiful prancing horses, are drawn into the opening as if by some enticing Lorelei. The air is filled with sounds heard only at the circus: cries, shouts, ballyhoo, rumbling of motors and shuffling feet under the bursts of applause, but there comes at one instant a great

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wave of sound that mounts above all the rest. It is a veritable blast of squealing, happy laughter from the throats of hundreds of children; a blast that keeps recurring as the Grand March progresses around the oval, and the grownups standing outside smile at each other and some one outside says, "There go the Clowns!" Wave upon wave of delighted laughter greets these prancing, living jokes, all gaiety, all fun, all extreme, all ridiculous, as they make their joyous way around the circus oval.

Strange as it may seem, a clown is not always a clown. Sometimes he is dressed in ordinary clothes and looks like any other mortal. Then how does he get that way? Here are some stories:

Many, perhaps most, of the professional circus entertainers, are born into the circus. A circus being an all-time job, families live right with it. Babies are born to the acrobats and other performers and grow up with circus life around them. Many clowns have first been acrobats doing comedy stunts on tight wires, slack wires, or as trick riders. Other young men become clowns simply because, as boys, they were fascinated with the idea.

Ernie Burch, of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, used to love to dress up for masquerade balls when he was a boy. By the time he was fifteen he had saved up enough money by taking first prizes at masquerades to pay for a trip from Newark, N. J., where he was born, to Texas to join a circus. He was then the youngest clown in the business. After working with Daly Brothers Circus, Cole Brothers Circus, Ray Brothers Circus, Sparkes Circus, he arrived in big time with the Big Top—Ringling Barnum and Bailey.

While playing in Los Angeles in September, 1951, he

had to undergo an operation, and when that was successfully over, he did the advance publicity for Cecil B. DeMille's picture *The Greatest Show on Earth*. He had what he calls a nice part in the picture, and Paramount Studios named him "Blinko the Clown." With the Big Top he wore the classical white Pierrot costume, though because of his love of costume, he changed from one to another throughout the performance, and appeared in eight different garbs. He wore green eyelashes about two inches long—and used them! This may help to explain his name, Blinko.

Burch hopes one day to write a book about his life and experiences as a clown. He is enthusiastic about his work, not only in the circus, but when the clowns carry their fun, good cheer, and happy humors to visit sick children in hospitals, homeless children in orphanages. For many professional clowns are as much in love with children as children are with them. Burch has done radio and television work, and also hopes some day to have his own television show.

Albert White's home town is Baltimore. As a child, his greatest love was the circus. Beginning to think about what he would do as he grew older, he made up his mind that he wanted to be a clown. After graduating at sixteen from Baltimore City College, he joined the Lamont Brothers' smallest motorized circus, and was with them, learning his clowning, for three years. After that he joined a musical stock company, performing in a song-and-dance act for five years. Then he returned to circus entertainment working his way up through five different circuses over a period of seventeen years, when he joined the *Greatest Show on Earth*—Ringling, Barnum and Bailey.

Albert White designs and makes all his wardrobes. As he can sew, he also designs and makes costumes for other clowns in other shows throughout the country. He, too, is a white-face traditional picture clown. But he also uses exaggerated female costumes, grotesque with padded, outsize hips, bust, feet, and hair-dos. He delights in all his acts, as when, for the Circus Serenade spectacle, he is Ring Mistress, dancing throughout the number; and when, in the Burlesque Hula number of the Gay '90's in the Wild West, as he says, "I get all my jewelry stolen."

Clowns have other duties in their circus life. White is also a teacher of children. The circus being stationary throughout the winter, its children can attend school in Florida. But many new actors are imported each year for new acts; and, since many are foreign, White teaches the circus children of foreign-speaking parents during the summer. When the afternoon performance is over, from 4:30 to 6:00, the clown teaches spelling, reading, and arithmetic to these children who, he says, are very eager to learn. With evening performances following, he often retains his make-up while teaching. Strange as it may seem to the rest of us, circus children become quite used to seeing clowns around them, and his pupils are not put off their studies by having a clown for a teacher. White says, happily, "they don't mind my face."

Ernie Burch, now Blinko, has handled elephants, lectured on snakes, sold tickets, and worked at the hamburger stand. Willie Mosier, who, with his mule partner, made people laugh for twenty-five years, served also as the circus mailman, often delivering over a thousand letters a day. He was also the dressing-room locksmith, and kept a collection of three thousand keys for use in emergencies.

The most renowned clown of the hobo type is Emmett Kelly. Kelly's background was not of the circus. He was a farm boy in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, longing for the lights and bustle of big cities. He studied cartoon drawing from a mail-order course he had read about in a magazine. Trying to earn some extra cash, he pursued this hobby on a mid-western newspaper, and also worked up a lightning-artist act, using colored chalks and a large paper pad, drawing simple cartoon pictures of Hawaiian sunsets, of Uncle Sam, and so on. His first appearance was at a church supper, and he did his quick-drawing act in pantomime because he was so shy he could not speak in public. Branching out to Kansas City, he succeeded in selling some of his cartoons, continued with his lightning sketches, and gradually began to invent more and more subjects.

One of his cartoon characters was a pathetic little hobo who, in time, began to have an appeal all his own. When Kelly's audiences expressed their special fondness for the little tramp he drew, Kelly had the idea of dressing up himself in the same guise. Thus he became known as the hobo artist. Without realizing it, he was starting out on a career and, naturally, he had no idea then where it would lead. Hired as a hobo clown to appear in a dog-and-pony show, he started in clownery.

Hiding his shyness behind his clown character, Emmett Kelly began to appear in Chautauqua circuits. "It was not until I hit upon doing the stunt in pantomime," he said, "and in the make-up of my favorite character that I became a success." He began to perform in circuses, night clubs, and then moved to a Broadway review. In 1942, Kelly joined the Big Top and soon became its star hobo clown. After the second World War, when the Circus

visited Europe, Kelly was applauded by the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill.

But clowns are made—not born. It took Kelly many years of drawing, stunting, and clowning, before he reached the point, at middle-age, which could be called the high mark in a clown's career—the big time.

Disguising his features with a large, round, pink nose which he copied from a pig's snout, mournful eyebrows, copied from those of a hound dog, eyes shadowed to look like the eyes of a wistful little monkey, jowls shaded blue and black to appear unshaven and unkempt, and with a red and white exaggerated mouth, Kelly would wander into the big tent a quarter of an hour before time for the show to commence, while people were finding their seats. He wore a battered, bashed-in derby hat, floppy shoes, and an outsize, tattered, black coat, which had been given him by a giant with the old Sells-Floto Circus. Some of the gestures he used, he also copied from animals, as when he would sit huddled up on the edge of a ring, nibbling at a head of cabbage, peering the while at the audience with his staring blinking monkey eyes. No creature could have looked more dejected, forlorn, and alone.

Then, wandering slowly and aimlessly around the circus oval, he looked for things to do. Dragging a thin, wilted broom, he would begin, halfheartedly, to sweep the ground. But then, seeing how much there was, he would give it up, it was impossible to sweep it all! With no clown pals to keep him company, the lonely hobo would begin to peer at people in the audience. Blinking wistfully, he seemed to be gazing at a world he could never know. How beautiful everyone looked—how happy! He spies a lady with a hat. It is such a lovely hat, he cannot take his eyes away from it.

Gazing at the unattainable, he falls into melancholy, growing sadder and sadder. Ladies giggle. But not he, for he is thinking how nice it would be to have such a lovely thing. But no—pretty hats and pretty ladies belong to a world too far away from him. One time a woman in Chicago's Coliseum audience was so affected by Kelly's peering at her in his dumb animal way, that she went home, baked him a cake, and brought it to him at the evening's performance.

When not peering at the unattainable, Kelly has enacted little pantomimic stories to prove that effort, no matter how great, never paid—at least, not for him. Trying to saw a big plank in half with a very small saw, he gets the saw stuck and wanders away, discouraged. Then he finds a nut and prepares to crack it. But when he does so—with a forty pound sledge hammer—he is doomed to go hungry, for nothing remains except a little powder, which he examines wistfully.

Kelly made eleven separate entrances during a performance under the Big Top, but he retained his ragged costume throughout. He appeared briefly in all production numbers, and used to say, "the only thing I'm not in is the all-girl aerial ballet."

There was once a time when he forgot his shyness and became a hero but he did not like to think about it afterwards. For it was the occasion of the tragic circus fire in Hartford. In the sudden awful emergency, Kelly transformed himself in a second to being a traffic cop, showing frantic people how to go out by way of the candy vendor's exit. He pointed a way to safety in a nearby field to the children of the audience, and he kept the fear-crazed crowds moving in the right direction, shouting orders loud above the horrible noise of panic.

Another act of heroism was spontaneously performed by Paul Horompo, a midget clown performer who was, at the time, playing the part of Grumpy in the Big Top's *Snow White* routine. This occurred when the circus was playing in the great indoor auditorium of New York's Madison Square Garden. The midget clown was standing in a corridor with the other dwarfs, all awaiting their cue, when a fierce tigress broke out of her cage, and came bounding along the corridor. She knocked over one dwarf who, wearing a big papier-mâché head, had not seen her coming. Paul, however, having removed his Grumpy head in order to wipe his perspiring brow, saw everything. Knowing that the lobby at the far end of the corridor was filled with children, the brave little man, about a yard high, jumped into the path of the wild, excited animal just as she reached him. He slashed at her with the only weapon he had—his little dwarf's pick, made of papier-mâché. The tigress was so surprised that she whirled around in her fury and bounded back the way she had come, running into the great net which menagerie attendants were by this time holding stretched out to receive her. Upon being congratulated by admiring newspaper reporters, Grumpy answered, "Who's a hero? I was so scared I couldn't even whistle while I worked." Of course the show went on as if nothing had happened, and Paul with his dwarf pals marched into the ring with their picks and shovels, whistling their entrancing little song, "Heigh-ho, Heigh-ho."

First Sergeant Elmer Lindquist, a veteran of two World Wars and of thirty-six years in the army, became a clown by courtesy of Uncle Sam. While he was serving in the Army of Occupation, he was told that he must study something. What would he prefer? Lindquist did not want to

study. The authorities insisted that he name some subject, however, since that was the next thing on his orders. He then replied that the only school for him would have to be a clown school. This seemed to satisfy the authorities, who bothered him no more, and he forgot all about the matter. After a few weeks had passed, the Sergeant learned, to his great surprise, that he was enrolled as a clown Freshman in Paris. Nine months thereafter, he received his certificate in buffoonery! After V-E Day and after having won a Distinguished Service Cross, a Silver Star, and five rows of Service ribbons, Lindquist decided to make clowning his next career. He went with the Sparks Circus, and his happiest clowning was done in Veterans Hospitals for the kind of buddies he had known so well and so long.

Many clowns use animal partners. Willie Mosier we have mentioned, whose partner was a mule. A duck named "Louie" shared the laughs with another clown. Charlie Bell's trick dog who climbed a ladder, balanced himself at the top and then jumped down into his master's arms, had once been a wandering waif. One night, the poor homeless dog walked out of an alley and bumped into Charlie, who was on his way to the station to his circus train. It was a case of mutual attraction and they teamed up then and there. The dog had walked right into a man who gave him love, a home with the circus, and a job! Felix Adler used baby pigs. He dressed them in real baby clothes, had them slide down a chute, and drink from nipples bottles. But there was one difficulty he had to learn to surmount. The little piglets grew so fast that he had to make friends with farmers all across the country so that he could keep exchanging his growing pigs for baby ones, as the show proceeded on its way from East to West and back again.

Adler, born in Iowa, began his career as a boy apprentice in an acrobatic act. But he was clumsy and constantly missed his tricks. It was this very attribute, however, which gave him the inspiration for his funnyman performances, which carried him to fame. He came to be a favorite at White House parties.

Paul Jerome, an important producing clown with the Big Top, is a hobo type, who spends a long time every day wiring himself, as he says, "for everything but sound." Carrying a small power plant behind him, he can show how his neon heart lights up and flickers with delight when he sees a pretty girl. Another light in his big round nose enables him to find things in the dark. When he joined the circus, Jerome was put into a jockey act, because he wanted to be a bareback rider. It was a small outfit and one day its only clown was fired. The manager came up to Jerome and said, "Go in there and be funny." Jerome did, and he's been doing it now for over thirty years. So there are instances when a man has become a clown by accident, as well as by design, or as a result of some special talent or attribute.

Some people like to do clowning as a hobby. One lawyer left a lucrative law practice to spend his summers as a clown. Some businessmen do it just for the fun of becoming different characters upon donning their clown suits. There is a club of clowns made up of businessmen in a mid-western city, who organized it as a civic enterprise. At their own annual city celebration somewhat after the manner of New Orleans' Mardi Gras, someone noticed that, though there were plenty of bands, floats, and pretty girls, there was nothing of special appeal for the children. A local newspaperman naturally thought of elephants and clowns.

Since it was too expensive to hire these from a circus, they conceived the idea of developing their own clowns. They couldn't develop elephants, but their clowns were so successful that a club was formed which held monthly meetings, when members tried out new stunts for each other. They invented their own clown costumes and clown personalities, but they studied from books and from the professional clowns when the latter came to town. It gave them a new outlook on life. Their chief once said, "You hear people saying, 'Oh, look at the funny clowns,' and you say to yourself, 'Oh, look at the funny people.'"

As salaries go, a clown's pay is not high. Most joeys are clever enough to do something else which might earn better pay, but they don't. It has been said that once a clown's absurd outsize shoes have flapped on the tanbark, and once "a wave of children's squealing laughter has blown like incense in his face, the clown's future is settled. His journey around the circus oval will last as long as he lives, and salary can never again be a major incentive."

The clowns' manner of presentation has changed with the times. In the 19th century, one singing clown sufficed to entertain an audience. This was so, it is said, when George Washington went to Ricketts' in Philadelphia in 1775 for a laugh and relaxation. Singing was the specialty of the first American clowns. A farmer came to town and went to the circus to hear his favorite rather than to see him. Circus "songsters" were sold in the arena, when the circuses were small and had but one ring. Songsters were paper-backed pamphlets containing the songs used in the performance, and were published by the circuses. The farmer would buy a copy so he could follow the words of the songs, and it was by them that a clown was identified.

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The clown was the "plugger" and popularized the songs. He was permitted to solicit buyers by selling these songsters in the arena, and he shared in the profits. But sometimes this concession was the only pay he received. It was considered a valuable concession, ranking between those for peanuts—and for pink lemonade! The songsters appeared in different shapes, sizes, and covers.

An Irish clown, named Johnny Patterson, was long remembered for his singing of a song of his own called, "The Garden Where the Praties Grow." He would stand in the runway of the somersaulters and tumblers, and sing. He wrote all of his songs, and sang them with a rich brogue.

This single singing clown had to be a master at telling jokes, and exchanging smart repartee with the ringmaster as the butt. This was also the style of presentation in the minstrel show. Small one-ring circuses were increasingly popular from 1860 to 1900, and with the development of railroads, scores of them went on the road. P. T. Barnum's show began in 1871, and Ringling Brothers in 1884. Their merger in the early 1900's produced the Greatest Show on Earth. With the performance growing in size to a two- and three-ring affair, the numbers of clowns used in one show increased, and the singing clown passed out of fashion, since he could not be heard by the vastly larger audiences in those days before the microphone. Then the pantomimic clowns appeared, who acted out their funny situations silently. All aspects of our living, even our entertainments, change with the coming of new inventions.

Now, in our circuses, clown numbers are generally divided into three types. First there is the walk-around, in which all of the circus's clowns parade around the track, each trying to get a laugh either by the costume he wears,

by the gadget he carries, or by the vehicle he rides. Second, there is a stop number, in which two or more clowns working together stop in one spot long enough to act out a pantomime which creates a laugh. Third, a production number. This is the most elaborate of the clowns' act, and has grown from the clown band, the crazy wedding, the great to-do with the fire-department kind of thing, to such delightful spectacles as scenes from *Alice in Wonderland*, or *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and other fairy tales.

Some of these ideas are faint ghosts of a type of entertainment that was purely American, and is now unhappily extinct: the minstrel show. This show could never have been created anywhere else on earth. Its inspiration came from the primitive singing and dancing or capering, joyous and gay, of the irresponsible, old-time, happy plantation Negroes of the South. The minstrel show was clowning from beginning to end. The actors, all male, were white men who blacked their faces with burnt cork. The contrast of their jet black faces, exaggerated large red lips, rolling eyes, and kinky wigs, above formal black and white evening dress with swallow-tail coats, was funny in itself. This show, presented on a stage, always began with a walk-around by the whole cast. Jokes and smart repartee, with the interlocutor sitting in the center as the butt, alternated with songs and dancing. The dancing was a take-off or imitation of plantation dancing, jigs, cake-walks, and clogging—the latter being the forerunner of the tap. Jokes treated of the fashions and the foibles of the moment, timely topics, with political and local touches. Amos n' Andy on the radio are all that is left of that gay, hilarious, old-time show by the artists of burnt cork.

Dan Rice (1823–1900) was the first blacked-face min-

strel man. He started with a Jim Crow dance he had copied from a caper he had seen on the Mississippi levees. His antics were much enjoyed and appreciated by a President who came to have great need of occasional fun and laughter—Abraham Lincoln. The President had deep feeling for the old-time uninhibited Negro. Rice became the most famous singing clown in American history, very popular and consequently highly paid. Literally, the old-time minstrel show might be called a folk show, and its dancing—folk-dancing, for crude though it was, it sprang from simple folk, and was never refined into something else.

The minstrel show appeared on the boards about the time of the Civil War, grew in popularity through the latter half of the 19th century and the first decade of our own century, making our great-grandparents laugh and chuckle, and was on its way out by the time of the first World War, when ragtime was definitely being played in with Irving Berlin's first hit, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*.

Frank Oakley, called Slivers, was one of the great clowns of the past, and he was the last prince of humor to have the whole arena to himself. Oakley was one of the stars of the whole show, and one of his most popular acts was his one-man baseball game. But he told a story to a friend to show that clowning is not always funny business. The friend, noticing a long scar under Oakley's right eyebrow, asked how he came by it. "That," explained the clown, "is a souvenir of an appearance in Chicago. As I was entering the arena, a youngster threw a tin can at me. The blood gushed out of my eye. As I was mopping it up with my handkerchief, I overheard this conversation:

" 'Say, Pa, did you see me hit that clown?'

" 'Yes, son.'

“‘It was a peach of a shot, wasn’t it?’

“‘It was, son.’”

Slivers had to jump into the ring and go through his act, hoping that he would not lose his eye, while hundreds roared at his funny antics.

How much of our character can be revealed, indeed, by the things we laugh at. Humor is a subtle thing, and the best of friends and the most congenial companions are those who are amused and entertained in common by the same kind of humor. When people of different nationalities are amused by the same jokes, and the same kind of humor, their sympathy is closer in every way.

As pain and pleasure are close companions, it was the hint of tragedy that made Charlie Chaplin’s little figure and gestures sublime.

Of all parts of the circus, it is the clowns who contribute the most to public morale. Clowns understand the importance of laughter. It was through the influence of no less a person than the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, during the first World War, that the circus was permitted to keep on the road, in order “to lift war-time morale.”

JOHN MULHOLLAND

✧ *Magician* ✧

THE magician is the man who does things that cannot be done. He specializes in performing the impossible. In the world of entertainment, he is superman. Before your very eyes, he can pick things out of the air and, in a flash, he can make them vanish. He changes things into other things, sometimes even live things. He can take something large out of a receptacle too small to hold it. He plays with mysteries. You cannot see how he does his astonishing feats, because his motions are too quick and too smooth, and while you are watching the outcome of the trick he is talking about, lo and behold, he has slipped another trick in—perhaps several tricks. The whole picture changes, and you are left wondering, puzzled, amazed, but always amused.

Only the man of magic can make you really enjoy being kept in a state of bewilderment. He weaves his spell, and you suddenly find yourself wondering why you did not see him do something he certainly must have done, for you were certainly watching hard. Could you have been looking at one hand and missed what the other hand was doing? And if so, why? Perhaps his talk misled you. If that was it, you are determined not to be caught the next time. But in spite of yourself, you are.

The good magician never makes a slip. He can't afford to. He never lets you see how he did it. That is why the magician's entertainment is such fun. You really would not want to know, unless you were wanting to learn how to be a magician yourself.

How would you go about that? Let us see how John Mulholland, America's great magician who has even been called one of the whole world's foremost magicians, managed his career.

Unlike the genii of the Arabian Nights, who appeared out of nowhere, the magician has to be born like anyone else. John Mulholland was born in Chicago just before the turn of the century. When he was very small his parents moved to New York, where John grew up, attending public and private schools. When he was only five—kindergarten age—he was first taken to see a magician's show. The magician was Harry Kellar, and what an influence he exerted on the little boy's life! The magical tricks performed by this wizard so amazed and delighted the boy, that he made up his mind then and there that when he grew up he would be a magician too, and wonders like these he would himself perform.

One of the tricks this five-year-old saw and remembered was, he learned later, a very old and exceptional piece of magic. Using an inexhaustible bottle, the conjuror was able to pour out of it several different kinds of liquids. Asking three or four persons in the audience what they would like to drink, he poured from that one bottle all the different drinks desired. After this astonishing performance, he told his audience they could see what was in the bottle, whereupon a live guinea pig came out! The small boy's eyes must have sparkled with delight as he watched marvel after

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marvel, thinking it would be the greatest fun in the world to be able to do such things. From that time on, he knew his goal. He only had to find out how to get there; what he would have to do to learn how to be a magician. Young as he was, he began to do tricks.

He could not spend all his hours on magic, however, for it was time to begin going to school. As he grew up, John went, after the grades and Horace Mann School, to City College, and then to Columbia University. School years passed while John was ever learning more tricks. He was always thinking about them. When hardly more than a young boy, he had studied and practiced a sufficient number to put on performances for his school friends. At their parties, there was John contributing to the fun with his magic. His act spoke for itself. Everybody liked him and liked to watch him. This was the beginning of publicity, for of course people told their friends about him. In no time at all, he was being asked to perform at social evenings and clubs. As soon as this happened, the aspiring magician, seeing that his entertainment was in demand, realized that he could begin to ask fees. Slight though they were at first, fees put him in the professional class, when he was only fifteen. This was what he had wanted since he was a little tyke of five. He enjoyed facing an audience of smiling, laughing, puzzled people, who watched him with eager eyes, trying to see how he was manipulating his sleight-of-hand wonders. It was fun, too, for him to see the different ways people reacted to the inexplicable and mysterious solutions.

John Mulholland was still a mere boy when he realized that a good magician needs to know something else besides a bag of tricks—however big. That is why, when other boys

were collecting stamps, match covers, ball gloves, and such things, John was intelligently collecting trades. He learned one after another, including carpentry and mechanics. Later on, when he began to invent tricks for himself which required certain peculiar paraphernalia—those strange instruments with which a magician works—he was able to construct his own. This was a great advantage. After he became a busy professional magician, he had to have these things made for him, but his knowledge of carpentry and mechanics still helps him to explain just what he wants.

By the time he reached his later teens, young Mulholland began to realize the value of perfect technique. So long as he looked like a boy, people would always enjoy seeing a youngster cleverly putting his tricks across. Grownups always enjoy seeing young people accomplish things. But he began to understand that, as he grew older, his audiences would become more critical. Then his performances would have to be fluent, polished, flawless. He wished to acquire a smooth and perfect presentation.

The master magician, like the artist-musician, dancer, singer, actor, must present his work with a professional and artistic finish. His technique must be so good that his performance—no matter how difficult—looks as if it is done with the utmost simplicity and the greatest ease. Technique must be perfect too, before the magician can reveal how much of an artist he is, for his imagination has full play only if his technique is so completely adequate that he doesn't even think of it.

Not only must a magician have technique for his amazing manipulations of his fingers, but he must learn the right things to say while he is performing them, in order to make his tricks more replete with surprise. This means

that he must understand timing perfectly—the exact moment when, during a trick, he must be saying a certain thing. A magician's line of talk is an important part of his show.

The purpose of his talk, which is filled with suggestions, is to mislead the audience into expecting him to do something which he really does not intend to do at all. Having planted an idea in people's minds, he makes them think they see the impossible accomplished. They shake their heads in amazement at such perfect deception. Thus he provides thrill after thrill. No magician can really cut a lady in half, and then put her together again, but he can make it look exactly as if that is what he has done. No wizard can really take a fifty-cent piece out of your ear, or out of the air, but he can make it look so. He can roll the coin around his fingers and hands so adroitly that you cannot see the coin at all. The magician is the only man with a license for deception.

Mr. Mulholland says that only ten per cent of a magician's performance depends upon manipulation, that is, sleight-of-hand technique. Another ten per cent depends upon equipment—tumblers, tables, coins, scarves, bottles, rabbits. What then makes up the great eighty per cent? What can be so important that most of the success of the performance depends upon it?

It is the psychological aspect of his presentation—knowing what to say, and when to say, just the thing to make you start thinking the way he wants you to think! Then, knowing what you are expecting, he is able to do something else that surprises you completely. It is the magician's brand of showmanship. In this way he makes his performance mysterious and astounding.

While you are thinking from cause to effect, the magician must be thinking from the effect back to the cause. He is trained to be able to think backward. He must, during a show, be thinking two lines of thought at once. He is thinking of what his hands are doing; he is also thinking of what he is saying; and, since he is deliberately misleading you, he is not always doing just as he is saying! In fact, he very rarely is.

When John wanted to improve the skill of his performance, this was the part of the work he needed to learn from a teacher. He went to an older and experienced magician, John William Sargent, and asked for lessons. Mr. Sargent, who did not like to teach, had only one or two pupils. Not realizing the boy's ability, and thinking, perhaps, to put off the newcomer, he finally told John that he would give him three lessons for fifteen dollars, payable in advance. Though at that time this was a stiff price, John had his fifteen dollars ready.

He went for his first lesson. The great magician showed examples of tricks, explained and analyzed manipulations. An hour passed. They were still working together when two hours passed. The older magician must have been pleased and definitely interested in his new pupil, for certainly John was eager to learn, quick, competent. Mr. Sargent discovered that this young man's manipulation was already exceptional. They worked together for six solid hours! Here was a pupil who made teaching a pleasure indeed.

Mr. Sargent told John to go home and practice what he had been shown for two weeks, and then come back. John did so, and returned for his second lesson. It was like the first. They worked for six straight hours. Again

John was told to go home, work on what he had learned that day, and return in two weeks. After he had had his precious third lesson, which also lasted six hours, John told his teacher that he would like another lesson, but he would have to wait until he could save up the money.

"Money for what?" asked Mr. Sargent.

"Money for another lesson," replied John.

Then the older magician really astonished his pupil by saying, "But you haven't finished your first lesson yet."

John Mulholland studied with Sargent for ten years and never, according to his teacher, did he finish his third lesson! He was a magician's scholarship pupil.

Mr. Sargent advised John to study the work of all other magicians. He was not to imitate teacher. He was to analyze, to the smallest detail, the style of every magician he could observe. He was to determine why each detail was good, or why it was bad; why an audience reacted the way it did; why and how the magician was able to make the audience like the trick. Mr. Sargent had himself made a great study of timing. It was of the greatest importance, he said, to make the right emphasis at just the proper moment. Mr. Sargent was the first magician in America, Mulholland says, to relate academic psychology—the kind one studies in college—to the magician's special psychology of deception or misdirection. He told John that "what the audience *thinks* you did is the important thing, not *what* you did." If the magician, by the suggestions and remarks that accompany his tricks, produces the desired illusions in the imaginations of his audience, "and if he is clever enough to make what is false appear to be logical, he can achieve the impossible with the greatest of ease." A magnificent game of pretend!

After John Mulholland finished his college work, he taught for some time in high school and in college, but even while he did this work in the daytime, he was a magician in the evenings, constantly keeping in practice, and improving his shows before an audience.

As the years moved on, he traveled thousands of miles to see other magicians' performances. Mulholland perfected his art of magic, and went to the head of his profession. The ambitions of his childhood were fulfilled. A magician of renown, he traveled to many foreign lands. He performed his magic in many other countries, in little remote islands, and he was always eager to see the work of foreign magicians, too. For magic is a beguiling art the world over. It was a Chinese magician friend who told Mulholland that fifty years of practice were required to become a skilled magician. Another magician worked with such precise attention to detail that each motion he made, however slight, was the result of careful study and rehearsal. So exact was he in every action, that he would use the very same motions in repeating a trick. Of course, he would only repeat a trick for another magician.

Master magicians are constantly devising new tricks. They will exchange with each other, but no honorable magician would think of using another magician's tricks, without first making a suitable agreement. John Mulholland has invented many magical tricks himself, and has also enlarged his repertoire by studying the work of magicians of other countries in his travels. He is also the author of several books dealing with his subject, and is the editor of *The Sphinx*, a magician's magazine. Articles on magic in the encyclopedias have been written by J. M. Though he has written a small booklet explaining some

tricks, they are not among those he himself uses in performance. The whole point of a magician's entertainment is to leave his audience puzzled as to how in the world he can do such things. If one understood how he accomplished a certain mysterious piece of magic, one would immediately lose interest in seeing it done. The only person who should know is the person who is going to be a magician.

John Mulholland advises beginners in magic to learn as much about other subjects as possible. Everything one can learn, he says, can be put to use by the conjuror. He himself learned trades, and he must have learned something of chemistry and physics, not to mention practical psychology. For instance, one trick which he explains in his little book shows that its inventor knew something about the movement of air currents. A candle is placed beside a very large jug. Any large circular vase will do. The candle is lighted and then, from a point opposite the candle on the other side of the jug, the performer can blow the candle out. To the spectator, it looks as if the performer is blowing *through* the jug to put out the candle flame, which is impossible. Actually, the blast of air against the circular object, passes around it, and snuffs out the flame on the opposite side.

Some people believe things too easily; other people are very hard to convince. Audiences are always different, both in types of people and in mood, and the magician must understand all kinds of possible audiences. Moreover, he must be able to gauge his audience accurately within the first few seconds. This must be learned through experience

Mr. Mulholland finds that children are not always the

easiest audiences, because they are great doubters. A magician's show brings him in closer contact with his audience than does the performance of other types of entertainers, because he really plays with his audience. John Mulholland enjoys having a mixed audience of ladies and gentlemen with some teen-agers. He calls on the teen-agers to participate in some of the trick routines; they are delighted to respond, all of which amuses the grownups.

Being a master in deception, our magician is very strict about its use. Used for entertainment and frankly labeled, innocent deception has the charm of a game of "let's pretend"—which delights young and old alike. But when deception is used but not admitted, then it is wrong and hurtful. Fortunetellers who raise false hopes and ideas in the minds of people who are too easily persuaded that they can foretell their futures are cheats, of course, since no one can really foretell what is going to happen in the future. Not even a magician can tell what the future holds! Sometimes students of history, adding up the probable results of certain situations, tendencies, plus human characteristics, can make very good guesses, but that is all. Fortunetellers therefore delude people by peddling false beliefs. Mr. Mulholland has used his skill against them. He once showed that in one year Americans spent over a hundred million dollars to fool themselves in this way.

Like any magician, John Mulholland loves magic better than anything else. He has given shows, upon request, in which each trick used certain specified objects. Once he presented a program of tricks using diamond jewelry, and once he used silk hosiery. He still carries around with him some of the fifty-cent pieces he used as a boy when he first started to learn how to make them disappear and re-

appear. It amuses him to surprise a friend or an acquaintance, at odd moments, by a sudden and unexpected turn of his sleight of hand. The fifty-cent pieces are not special coins in any way, but he is fond of them. He began having fun with them when he was a small boy, and he is still having fun with them.

MARIAN ANDERSON

✧ *Concert Singer* ✧

IN A dingy section of Philadelphia there was born, on February 27, 1908, a little girl whose manner of living was to change as much as Cinderella's. Like the girl of the fairy tale, she had two sisters, though her sisters were not unkind. Like Cinderella, she had to do kitchen chores and scrub floors.

But there were differences, too. For one thing, the Philadelphia girl, whose name was Marian Anderson, belonged to the Negro race. For another thing, she did not achieve fame and fortune the easy way, by catching the fancy of a Prince Charming and marrying him. Instead, she achieved these desirable things before she married—by her own hard work, her love for singing, and her faith in study.

So far as we know, Cinderella was not born with a beautiful voice. But little Marian, with the velvet brown complexion and shining black eyes, could sing so beautifully, from the very beginning, that when she was only six, she joined the choir in her church, the Union Baptist, and the choir was glad to have her. The child's voice was remarkable for its quality and for its volume. Soon she was attracting to the Union Baptist Church people who

came expressly to hear her. Little did she know then that she would one day be singing in great concert halls the world over! At that time she had never even been in a concert hall.

In the beginning, then, she had the gift of song. She was also blessed with a strong, sturdy body. She had a wise and loving mother, whose firm and simple faith, good sense in rearing her child, and ardent labors for her, combined to help the girl on to success. Added to these advantages, as she grew up, was the willingness to work and work hard.

Her disadvantages were the lack of money for a musical education; lack of any acquaintances in musical circles who could advise her parents; and the fact that she was of a race which, though possessed of instinctive rhythm and musical feeling, had not as yet produced many musicians who had reached artistic heights. Being a Negro was not, however, so great a drawback in the 1900's as it would have been if she had been born in the 1800's or, indeed, if she had been born in the land from which her forebears came. Her courage and hard work have overcome all disadvantages. She has become one of the most popular American concert singers of her time, with a worldwide reputation.

Besides singing, Marian thought a good deal about music when she was very little. She used to sit at a bench in the kitchen and go through the motions of playing on it, pretending it was a piano. While she did so, she would sing, and pretend to be accompanying herself.

The Andersons lived where rents were low. The father sold ice and coal for a living. With three little girls to feed and clothe, there was not much money to spend on

extras. The mother, who had once been a school teacher in Virginia, found herself busy raising her family, keeping house, cooking, washing, and scrubbing, but in spite of that, she always found time to take part in church affairs.

The mother and three daughters formed a quartette of harmonious voices. Marian had an aunt who also sang beautifully, and with whom she remembers singing a duet in public, called "Sing Me to Sleep." Thus Marian's childhood years were filled with singing at home, and at church she not only heard, but constantly took part in, four-part singing, in itself excellent musical experience.

Mrs. Anderson began to realize her daughter's talent. She did not see how it could be developed, but she possessed a fervent and abiding faith that, if her daughter did truly have gifts and character worth developing, some way would be found. She was not a mother to rush things and to push her daughter forward.

When Marian was eight years old, a big moment arrived. Long before, she had wanted a violin. Her father good-naturedly began to save up hard-earned pennies to buy her one. It was not easy, but when at last he had three dollars, he and his musical daughter went off to a pawn-shop to see what they could find.

Young as she was, Marian wanted the pawnbroker to assure her that the three-dollar violin he offered them was really a good one. It was a fine violin, said the pawnbroker, and trustful little Marian joyfully carried it home. But in spite of her father's sacrifices, Marian's experiments in violin-playing did not amount to much. For one thing, the violin is not an easy instrument to master. She had no teacher. Moreover, a three-dollar violin is only—a three-dollar violin. Some time later, however, the An-

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dersons managed to buy a piano, and with this instrument Marian found more pleasure.

It was in the junior choir at church, however, that the young girl found best expression of her musical feelings, for singing was her kind of music. When the neighbors and the church congregation found that little Marian was drawing people especially to hear her, she began receiving invitations to sing even outside the church.

A young preacher, new to the vicinity and eager to organize meetings, hired a store-front. A notice of his service was placed in the store window, which stated that an added attraction would be singing by the ten-year-old "baby contralto." Marian, passing by and reading the notice, wondered why it said ten, when she was really eight. Probably the volume of her voice made it difficult to believe that she could be so young. On this occasion she received her first pay for singing; it was fifty cents.

When she was twelve, her father died. Her mother now had to take in washing and ironing to keep the family going. Marian had to work too, and scrubbing floors was part of it. But so long as she could sing and save up money for the lessons she hoped some day to have, she did not mind. Joining the church's senior choir when she was thirteen, Marian continued to sing in both choirs until her late teens. She was, in fact, the mainstay of these groups, for, being reliable and always on hand, she was often asked to sing the parts of absent singers. Most willingly, she would sing any part required of her, not only her most comfortable contralto, but also soprano, tenor, and even bass. She sang the bass an octave higher, of course. The artist now considers that this early experience helped her to acquire the unusually wide range which her

mature voice possesses. Constantly singing and hearing that four-part harmony was an excellent basis for her later study. She had sung for many years, had even appeared in sixteen concerts outside of her native city before she ever had voice lessons.

As the years went by, Marian moved up through the grades of a good grammar school and high school. During all this time, she sang regularly in church on Sundays and many week nights. Loving to sing, she was never nervous about it. More and more frequently she was asked to sing at other churches throughout the city. Sometimes she sang in two or three churches the same night. At first, she received small pay in addition to her trolley-car fare, but gradually through the years, the pay increased. From fifty-cents, it expanded to a dollar; then to two and three dollars, and then up to five and ten.

During her second year in high school, a Negro actor named John Thomas Butler, noticing her voice, sent her to a teacher. This teacher, Mary Saunders Patterson, was impressed enough to give her free lessons for almost a year. Then more opportunities came her way. The Philadelphia Choral Society gave a benefit concert for her and she received a two-year scholarship to study with Agnes Reifsnnyder, a teacher and contralto singer. Marian continued to accept eagerly every singing engagement, often appearing as assisting artist on the programs of visiting performers.

Her high school principal, Dr. Lucie Wilson, was a discerning teacher who proved to be a most helpful friend. Seeing that Marian was eager to find an excellent teacher, one who could advise her how to go about working into a singing career, she herself paid Marian's fee for an audi-

tion with David Bispham. Marian was then nineteen. But when Mr. Bispham died soon after, Marian made an appointment to sing for Giuseppe Boghetti, a teacher of repute in the musical life of New York and Philadelphia.

All this did not happen quickly, however. Arrangements for auditions had to be made in advance, naturally. She could not just walk in and sing for an important teacher.

One snub she has never forgotten. She had gone into a large musical institution, hoping to arrange for an audition. In the office, she encountered a girl, who, upon seeing the visitor, simply got up and left the room. Marian waited. She waited and still waited. After a long time the girl returned and, with a look of impudent surprise, said, "What, are you still here?" With malicious glee, she told Marian that she could not possibly study in that institution. Marian sensed that no one in authority had been informed that she had come to see about lessons; the decision was so obviously the prejudice of the office girl. But what could she do? She turned silently away with an ache in her heart. The girl had seemed to enjoy hurting her feelings.

It was altogether different, however, when she went to sing for Signor Boghetti. Long afterward, he still remembered the first time he heard her sing. She had come to his studio at the end of the day. He had been teaching all day long and he was very tired. At that moment, he was even tired of singing and tired of singers. Now, here came another. Marian, by this time a tall girl with calm bearing, entered his studio, and sang a calm song. It was a song of her own people, the Negro Spiritual, "Deep River." Her singing brought the tears to his eyes.

The people of her own local community, by this time, took great pride in her voice. Friends at school, church, and elsewhere, eager to see her progress, raised a fund "for Marian Anderson's future." The Union Baptist Church organized a benefit concert, at which she sang. With all this friendly aid and encouragement, Marian obtained the money necessary for her lessons.

She was in her early twenties when Mr. Boghetti began quietly to train her for an approaching competition, though he did not tell her, because he did not want her counting on it too much. The winner was to be given an engagement with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra in the Lewisohn Stadium in New York. When the competition took place, three hundred candidates were on hand to be heard. One after another sang. Marian waited. She was the very last to be heard. Her teacher exhorted her to keep on singing even if the gong sounded as a signal for her to stop. She sang "O Mio Fernando" from Donizetti's *La Favorita*. The gong did not sound. She was heard to the end, and she won the competition. She sang in the Stadium with great success, and received another engagement to sing with the same orchestra. After this, a concert manager gave her her first contract.

It appeared as if she were now successfully launched upon her career, for the critics had been favorable, but disappointing years were still ahead. In spite of favorable criticisms, her manager did not succeed in obtaining good engagements for her. For about six years all that he could get for her were engagements to sing for Negro organizations at very moderate fees. There were comments that, though Miss Anderson had a wonderful voice, it was too bad she was a Negro. Personality may have had some-

thing to do with it, for a manager who is successful with one artist may fail with another. Disposition, understanding, and sympathy are qualities that enter into the business side of music, just as they enter into all human relations. Whatever the reason, Miss Anderson achieved artistic success several years before she began to achieve financial success.

Both she and her teacher realized that she must have something more to offer than a glorious voice. Mr. Boghetti advised her to go to Europe, find her public there, and come back to America with an established European reputation. American audiences of those days still had the old feeling that an artist had to have a foreign reputation before she was worth listening to. Americans were not yet quite willing to trust their own artistic judgment. Only within the last generation have American artists and American-trained artists begun to have a chance for a home-grown reputation. In Marian Anderson's case there was another consideration. An artist of her race was much more likely to attract a public in Europe, where there are few Negroes, than in the United States where there are many.

So to Europe she went, after winning the Julius Rosenwald scholarship at a concert in Carnegie Hall, New York. She now wanted to study the rich musical literature of the German *lieder*. That meant that she would have to know the German language, and know it well. For this purpose she lived with a German family.

She loved it all. It was exciting to live in a foreign country and make friends with people of other nationalities. As she began to comprehend the language, her capacity for appreciation was of course vastly enlarged. She discov-

ered new meaning, even in songs she had learned years before in Philadelphia. She now realized that she had been singing songs without completely understanding them and, therefore, without finding all their beauty. One example was the Schubert *Ave Maria*. When she first studied this masterpiece, it had seemed "monotonous and tiresome." She had sung the words without understanding their real meaning. After she had been living in Germany, she tried it again. It was a new song, because now she understood it, and eventually it became a favorite of hers and of her audiences as well.

Miss Anderson's first concert in Berlin cost her \$500, but that was the last time she ever had to pay for the privilege of giving a concert. A concert manager in Sweden was much interested. Attracted by the name Anderson, he thought the young artist might score a success in Sweden, where there were Andersons a-plenty, but no colored folk at all. Wanting a reliable opinion on her voice, her stage presence, and her personality, he sent a Finnish pianist, Kosti Vehanen, to Berlin to hear her and report.

By this time, the American contralto was singing the German 19th century songs eloquently. Her Negro Spirituals, some of which appear in all her programs because, as she says, "they are my own music," were also being warmly received. German and Austrian audiences in the early 1930's went quite wild about the new contralto. After hearing her in Berlin, Mr. Vehanen not only gave her a good report, he became her accompanist.

They traveled to Sweden, where Miss Anderson sang to enthusiastic audiences. In Stockholm she sang for King Gustav, in Copenhagen for King Christian. In Finland she was invited to meet, and sing for, the great Finnish

composer, Jean Sibelius. Greatly impressed, he told her, "The roof of my house is too low for your voice."

This was the beginning of the successful years. Mr. Boghetti had been right. After much faithful work, studying and singing, Miss Anderson was on the way to becoming one of the most popular of concert singers.

Many European engagements followed. She sang in Paris, where audiences went wild with enthusiasm, and in London. She toured Italy, Austria and the Low Countries. Reports trickled back to the United States about the American Negro contralto who was making such a great name for herself in Europe, and American audiences then were in a mood to listen to her. Toscanini's pronouncement must have helped, too. After hearing her during the Salzburg Music Festival in 1935, he said, "A voice like yours is heard only once in a hundred years." The concert manager, Sol Hurok, who had been at the Salzburg Festival and had heard her there, signed a contract with Miss Anderson at once. Under his management, she was scheduled for a New York recital the following December.

This would be a significant and important occasion. After years of study abroad, gaining a wide European reputation, her "return" was greatly anticipated. Imagine then, what the artist's feelings were when, on board ship on the way home, she slipped and broke a bone in her foot! But even this did not prevent her from fulfilling her engagement. When people entered the Town Hall auditorium, they saw the curtains drawn across the stage. At 8:45, the curtains were drawn aside and revealed Miss Anderson, dressed in gleaming white, standing at the piano. Until the intermission, the audience did not understand the reason for this unusual procedure. She sang the whole

first half of her program while standing in one position, then, before the curtains were drawn together again to permit her to hobble offstage, she explained that her foot was in a cast.

Music critics wrote for the next day's papers that "Marian Anderson has returned to her native land one of the great singers of our time"; that she had a contralto "of stunning range and volume, managed with suppleness and grace"; that her musicianship was shown by her interpretation and command of style in singing Händel, Schubert, a Verdi aria, Finnish songs in Finnish, and naturally, her Negro Spirituals. There was "sheer magnificence of the voice itself considered as a musical instrument." She was admired for her gallant appearance under the handicap of the recent accident.

One month later, by popular demand, the singer gave a recital in Carnegie Hall, New York, which is much larger than Town Hall. She was now singing to capacity houses in her own country. She had won her public and was launched at last upon a great career. At twenty-eight, she had become one of the most popular concert singers of her time. In March she gave a third New York concert, after which she was off to another Continental tour which was to include Russia.

Miss Anderson liked Russia—in 1936—because the people were so appreciative and enjoyed her singing. In spite of the government's attitude, she found audiences hungry for religious songs. In Leningrad, they called out for her to sing Ave Maria, which had not been listed on the program because of the Soviet ban on religious music.

Russia was, however, a decidedly queer and uncomfortable country in which to travel. The Russians did not

wholly abide by the contract, which stated plainly that no recital was to be broadcasted. At her first appearance, the singer noticed a microphone. Backstage, she asked her accompanist, Mr. Vehanen, if he had noticed it. A Russian woman interpreter, hearing the question, remarked at once: "In Russia, one does not ask questions." Miss Anderson made three tours in the Soviet Union and learned afterward that every recital had been broadcasted, contract or no contract.

The following year when Miss Anderson sang in Boston's Symphony Hall there were shouts of "more, more." Anyone familiar with Boston's restrained audiences knows that such spontaneous expression is a most uncommon tribute. Her singing of Schubert songs was highly praised. She was singing with an amazing range of three octaves, her lower tones had "hair-raising depth and resonance." Such songs as the Schubert *Erkönig* which consist of conversation between two voices of different and contrasting range and color, she managed with consummate skill and artistry. When she was to sing, the box offices could now put up their signs, SOLD OUT. In Paris, she won the Grand Prix du Chant for the best recorded voice in Europe. The record was the Schubert song, "Death and the Maiden."

What a far cry all this was from singing in the choir of the Union Baptist Church! Her progress from the time she was twenty to the age of thirty was astonishing. Ten years after she first went to Europe, she had over two hundred songs in her repertoire. There have been some artists who, unknown one day, found themselves famous the next. But in these cases too, years of hard work preceded the break.

Success and fame left Marian Anderson's calm equilib-

rium undisturbed. Her qualities, which reviewers have commented upon over and over again, have been her devotion, her intensity, her self-effacement, her breadth and nobility of style, the simplicity of her manner, and the honesty of her thinking. But with all these rewarding verbal bouquets, she herself has said that the happiest time she ever knew was when she could go home and tell her mother that she would not have to take in washing any more.

In 1939, an unpleasant and unfortunate incident occurred which had much publicity. Until within the last generation our capital city of Washington, never remarkable for its artistic life, heard very little music. Only in the last three decades have Washingtonians had a slowly increasing number of musical opportunities, largely because of the generosity of a great patroness of music, Mrs. Elizabeth S. Coolidge. The only large concert hall where symphony concerts can be heard is Constitution Hall which was built by the patriotic order of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The ladies of the D.A.R. forbade Marian Anderson the use of their hall for a concert. Much indignation and feeling were aroused. As a result of this quite undignified situation, Miss Anderson was offered the use of the Lincoln Memorial for an outdoor concert in the capital city. Under the high auspices of Members of Congress, Justices of the Supreme Court, and Cabinet Officers, Marian Anderson sang to an outdoor audience of 75,000 persons on Easter Sunday.

Miss Anderson harbors none of the ill feeling or resentment, which is evident in some other artists and writers of her race. There is no room in her heart for hard feeling and bitterness over the extra hardships she has had to over-

come. Her sweetness of spirit permits her to rise above pettiness and indignation. Her wisdom tells her that such intolerance and prejudice in others, of every race, stems from ignorance. How much more far-sighted she is than those others of her race who have tried to persuade her to join with them. Steadfastly, she has refused to mix such things with her art, explaining simply, "Music is my way."

The singer has received many honors, prizes and degrees. She was invited to sing at the White House when the King and Queen of England visited President and Mrs. Roosevelt. Receiving the Bok Award of \$10,000, she used it to establish a Marian Anderson Award to help young students of musical talent. These awards are granted annually through a committee which administers the fund, and already more than twenty-five winners have received scholarships amounting to more than \$20,000. Two of these have appeared in opera and musical shows.

The life of a musical artist is not a quiet one. It is filled with travel. Annual tours are planned by the manager. There is not much time to spend at home. Since she realized her first great success, Miss Anderson has usually spent all her winter months touring the United States, giving as many as seventy to ninety-two recitals in one season.

Springtime brings trips to other countries. When she returned to Europe after the second World War, she sang in eight different countries, to houses that had been sold out weeks in advance. She has long been a record-breaker in the size of her audiences. In a recent year, after her American tour, Miss Anderson went to Europe and sang twenty recitals in five countries in May and June. At the end of June she sailed from Italy to South America, where,

in two months, she sang twenty-five times. That means an average of three recitals a week. The demand to hear her was so great that she gave four recitals in Rio de Janeiro, seven in Buenos Aires, three and four in each of several other large cities. Then she was called back to sing the *Star Spangled Banner* at the Victory-in-Europe reception for General Eisenhower in 1945. In the fifteen years after her first triumphant return to her own country, she sang to more than four million listeners. Millions more have heard her on radio. One critic wrote that she gave "solace to the ear and to the spirit, too." In 1950, a poll taken of six hundred music editors in the United States and Canada, named her radio's foremost woman singer for the sixth consecutive year.

For many years, Miss Anderson's home was across the street from the house in which she had been born. In the early 1940's, she married Orpheus H. Fisher, a New York architect, and about that time she bought a farm in Connecticut where she loves to be. Pet animals are a hobby, and her husband enjoys dog-breeding. Miss Anderson likes to grow some of the garden things, taking pleasure in simple country delights which she did not have when she was a little city girl. In her cozy sitting room, a napping cat curls up on the cushioned chair in front of the television set. In her entrance hall, a beautiful large aquarium greets the eye with the constant movement of gaily colored little fish. The atmosphere of her house is as soothing as her personality. She loves to have her mother with her there during a rest from traveling. She says, "My Mother is good to have around; she is calm and wise." No doubt, the daughter inherited much of her mother's temperament, and she has said, "I do a good deal of praying." She is

ardently religious. The singer has the charming habit of saying "we" and never "I" in speaking of her plans and her travels. She considers herself and her accompanist, apparently, as a team.

Most artists of her stature who lead busy routines of concerts and tours require a maid to do the endless packing, unpacking, pressing of gowns, and so forth. Miss Anderson tried it once but gave it up. Uneasy because she did not know where her things were, she preferred to get along without the maid, do her own packing, press her own concert gowns. On tours she lives in hotels and trains. In some hotels, she has found it convenient to be able to prepare some of her own meals in her suite. She has always found a way. Consequently, packed in her baggage are some cooking utensils. For many years she took her sewing machine along. She loves to sew. When she has a free day on tour, she likes to make curtains or something for her home in Connecticut. There was a time when her luggage amounted to 22 pieces, but she has since whittled it down to the necessary wardrobe for both hot and cold climates. Her fondness for pets caused her to carry with her, one year, a turtle which she had acquired in France.

Miss Anderson does not experience the terrific nervousness at the beginning of a concert common to so many artists. At most, she sometimes has a slight feeling of anxiety, because of her eagerness to have the audience like her singing, but with the first number even that disappears, and she is absorbed in the business of singing.

She memorizes easily. Her studio, where she practices, stands some little distance from her house, a quiet retreat by a murmuring brook. She never practices in full voice longer than one hour a day, and never that whole hour at

any one time. Though she says that the well used voice does not tire, she also says it is wise not to overdo. She never sings when she is tired.

"In choosing program material," she has said, "I make two requirements. Whatever the period or school of the song, it must first of all be beautiful. In second place, it must make some special appeal to me. Only then can I draw the best from it. There are many songs the beauty of which I can perceive only in an impersonal way; they are not a part of me. I believe that worthy interpretations result only when the singer can fuse his own inner vein with the message of the composer. It is a mistake to gauge song values in terms of success, or popularity of the moment.

"No one song may equally delight every one in the audience; but a sincere giving of self must always command respect. And a song must belong to one before it can be given to others.

"Spirituals are my own music . . . A person can love Schubert even if he knows nothing of Vienna. Many Spirituals have been arranged for me by Swedes, Frenchmen, and Swiss, who have never seen our South." There are, however, those who feel that a Spiritual which has not come from the Negro, lacks the authentic ring. As to modern music, the singer says, "I prefer to sing in the same key as the accompaniment."

Miss Anderson has turned down many film offers, believing that the films do not advance the cause of good music, as they play down below, rather than up to, the musical taste of its audience. She was filmed, however, during the Lincoln Memorial Concert; again while singing *Ave Maria* for a Signal Corps Christmas song-short; again for a March of Time educational short.

Miss Anderson feels that the arts are learned rather than taught, and the student can learn something from every competent artist. Students of today are much more fortunate, she thinks, than were those who studied before they had the advantages of recording machines. She has learned much, she says, from listening to records of the greatest artists. In her own practice, she uses records of accompaniments, which have been made for her by her accompanist.

"You can't become a singer in a year," she says, "even in five years." This feeling belongs only to the sincere artist, who has knowledge of what there is to be learned. The singer says, "How can I make a song say anything to other people unless it first says something to me? And how can it say anything to me unless it has my life in it somewhere?"

One reason for Miss Anderson's first visit to Europe was to live there long enough to learn and absorb a language in order to sing in it. Then she realized, as everyone will realize who learns another language besides his own, that a new language opens up a new and delightful world. Miss Anderson says, "Even if we were never again to travel abroad, or even if all songs, all books, all plays, were to be written in English, I'd still wish that every American boy and girl could learn at least one language besides English. You really don't know your own language till you can speak at least one other."

Miss Anderson also feels that we try to get things done too fast, that composers do not take time to work over their ideas. "Most songs," she says, "are written too fast nowadays . . . If they are fairly good, they are sung everywhere in a short time, then they are forgotten."

The singer does not believe that opportunities are lim-

ited for Negro musicians in America. She has found that there are so many different kinds of people in this great country, that one can always find some who will appreciate and understand what an artist of any race is doing. She reminds us that there is a Spiritual called *Stay in the Field*. "I think," she has said, "that might be a good motto for Negro musicians."

BING CROSBY

✧ *Singer—Microphone Style* ✧

IF THE story of Bing Crosby were put in a novel, readers would complain that the whole thing was implausible. A thing like that, they would say, can't happen. But it did happen, all the same. It is the kind of story which proves the old cliché that truth is stranger than fiction. For though Bing was an average American boy with average tastes, his career and rise to fame as a singer were anything but average. It is extraordinary that an untrained singer could achieve a popularity so widespread that it can be said that more people have heard and can recognize his voice, than any other in the history of the human race.

Harry Lillis Crosby was born in Tacoma, Washington, May 30, 1904, number four in a large family that ultimately included five brothers and two sisters. His forbears came to this country a long time ago, the earliest having arrived on the *Mayflower*. One great-grandfather was a sea captain, who sailed around the Horn while Forty-Niners were pushing west in prairie wagons. He was one of the founders of Portland, Oregon. Ancestors on both sides of the family played their parts in the settling of the Northwest.

When Harry was two years old, the family moved to

Spokane, where the boy went to school, and where he got the nickname that is now famous. He and the boy next door shared a liking for a comic strip called *The Bingville Bugle*. Deciding that young Harry looked like the character Bingo in this "funny," the neighbor boy began to call him Bingo. Later shortened to Bing, in time the world came to know him by this name.

Young Bing went to the Webster grade school. Without having to work very hard, he seemed to learn his lessons. Things came rather easily to him, and his attitude was one of taking things easily, too. Among his teachers he got the reputation of being lazy, but he moved right up in the grades as the years went by—whistling and singing as he went.

His mother had a good voice and, until her family of seven children demanded all her time, had been soloist in a church choir. His father, who earned a modest salary as a bookkeeper, could play the mandolin very well. This was a very popular instrument in the early 1900's. In his youth, Mr. Crosby had sung in amateur Gilbert and Sullivan productions. The Crosby parents were fond of light music, and frequently the whole family indulged in Sunday evening song fests. The kind of songs they sang were sentimental tunes, and those from musical shows then in vogue,—"In the Good Old Summertime," "The Merry Widow Waltz," "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." Secretly, Mrs. Crosby cherished the hope that one of her children might turn out to be musical enough to have a career.

When the two daughters were old enough to have piano lessons, Mrs. Crosby sent for Grandma's piano and the lessons began. But the boys couldn't find time to practice.

What Bing liked best was something his father brought home one day—a phonograph, with a big morning-glory horn. He learned the songs from those tinny reproductions and thereby enlarged his whistling and singing repertoire.

A devout Catholic, Mrs. Crosby taught her children religious discipline and saw to it that they formed the habit of regular church attendance. Gonzaga College, which has since become a University, administered by the Jesuit Fathers, was only a few blocks away from home, and Bing entered its high school section.

Tuition for seven young ones was a large item, but the parents took care of it, meantime warning their children that, if they wanted spending money for bicycles, entertainment, athletic equipment, and the extras young people like, they would have to earn it. Bing got himself a paper route. He had to get up at four in the morning to deliver papers for two hours before school. He hated it on cold, dark winter mornings, but even more, he hated to be without spending money; so he went whistling around the streets before people were up—whistling the tunes he heard on the records his father brought home.

He had other early morning duties, too. At six-thirty, the Fathers of Gonzaga celebrated Mass at St. Aloysius Church and all students attended. Some boys were chosen to serve as altar boys. Each served for one week out of every three. Bing was an altar boy, and he turned up regularly at 6:30, seven days out of every twenty-one, for a period of four years. Though some of his friends have recalled that Bing was indifferent about punctuality, sometimes late even for classes, he was always careful to be prompt for these duties. Having formed the habit of early rising when he was young, he never got over it.

The Jesuit teachers were not beguiled by what were called new ideas in progressive education. On the contrary, they held classical studies in high esteem. Bing studied what was required of all their students: four years of Latin, two of Greek, a four year course in religion, four also in English—grammar and literature; two each of history and mathematics, and a year of chemistry or physics. It was also important at Gonzaga to study elocution—clear enunciation and well chosen words—and to use it in debate. Bing belonged to the debating society, took part in elocution contests, and developed an interest in words to such an extent that he carried a thesaurus around with him so he could learn new words with their synonyms and antonyms.

In the Gonzaga band, Bing was the drummer though he never did learn a professional drumming technique. He bluffed it. Unable to perform a proper roll on the drums, he would fake it with a wire fly swatter. He figured out ways to get his noise effects.

Bing always loved athletics. He excelled in swimming, for which he won many medals. He played football, basketball, and his favorite baseball. Bing's golf began when he served as caddy at the public course. As the years went by, he became an ardent and superior golfer. In his 'teens, he found other jobs to earn pin money. He did janitor's work cleaning out a clubroom, mornings before school, at a dollar a day, and he worked at the Post Office during the Christmas rush. He did so many different part-time jobs while he was growing up that his own sons find it hard to believe all his stories of the work he used to do. The job he liked best was as a helper behind the stage in Spokane's Auditorium Theatre, where touring theatricals performed. This gave him a chance to see the shows, and it was during

this time that he first saw—and heard—Al Jolson. Without being aware of it, he was beginning to like the whole idea of show business.

When he and his boy friends had spare time, they went to one of their homes to listen to phonograph records. Summers they went to a park to listen to a dance band. Bing grew increasingly fond of singing and of listening to popular music. He had not much time to devote to it, with his chores around the house, and his other jobs during vacation, but singing the new songs he heard on records did not take time. He could sing while he worked. He never took voice lessons. It never occurred to him to do so.

It did occur to his mother, however, and she once took him to a singing teacher "for a couple of lessons," he recalls in his entertaining story of his life which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. But when the teacher insisted on exercises for breathing and tone production, and forbade him singing his popular songs, Bing lost interest in singing in public for a time. His kind of music was the dance and show music he heard on records, and dance bands.

Bing heard some of the first broadcasts ever made by jazz bands on a homemade radio set. He was sixteen when his mechanical-minded brother and the physics professor at Gonzaga together built, for the Crosby family, one of Spokane's first radio sets.

The following year, toward the end of Bing's first year at college, he made a lucky move. He joined a group of six boys which formed Al Rinker's band, calling themselves The Musicaladers. Bing was the only Gonzaga boy in this group. He was drawn to Al Rinker, a boy younger than himself, when he discovered that Al was not only

clever on the piano but had an ear so keen that he could imitate the music of the best jazz bands from hearing their records.

Not one of the Musicaladers could read music. But they had good ears. Al Rinker would listen to a record, pick out the parts on the piano, and teach each boy his part by ear. Then they would rehearse together, their aim being to sound as much like the records of the famous eastern bands as possible. Paul Whiteman's band and others, which had high reputations in the East, were the models of the Musicaladers. They made the kind of music which Bing and his friends understood and loved.

In the years just preceding the first World War, our whole country had gone wild over dancing. "Alexander's Ragtime Band," written by Irving Berlin not long before, had spread ragtime over the land like a prairie fire. The young, the middle-aged, were all dancing the fox-trot, the one-step, and the tango. Berlin soon wrote "Everybody's Doing It." The Edison phonograph with its cylindrical records died out, when the Victrola with disc records was born, but the ragtime kept on. When young people could not go dancing in dance halls and park pavilions, they danced in their home parlors to victrola records. Gradually ragtime swung into jazz. Ragtime bands were heard no more. They were jazz bands now.

With the Musicaladers, Bing Crosby played the drums and sang on the side. He had begun to think that the most wonderful way to earn a living was to sing for it, the way Al Jolson did. Bing got his drums from a mail-order house, and the boys practiced enthusiastically in the parlors of their homes.

He was ever on the alert for a chance to earn money for

the Musicaladers. When the boys had learned how to play five pieces, Bing looked around for paying engagements. Hearing that a Social Club was going to have a party, for which they would need dance music, Bing approached the girl in charge of the program and asked her to try the Musicaladers. The girl wanted to hear a sample of their music. After the boys obliged, she engaged them to play from eight to twelve on the specified evening. They would be paid eighteen dollars.

Their great problem was to make their five pieces stretch out over four hours! These rhythm boys conceived the idea of playing each piece over several times, but in different rhythms. The same tune appeared as a waltz, as a one-step, as a fox-trot, and again as a tango. It was admittedly not too good, but the dancers made no objections. The music was loud, it was rhythmic, and that was what the dancers wanted. The Musicaladers played with great enthusiasm, and Bing, for one, was making more than he ever had, for four hours work. He loved every minute.

After their first engagement, the Musicaladers worked harder than ever to enlarge their repertoire. Young people liked their music because it was different from any of the other local bands. What made the difference was that others local bands played stock arrangements bought at the music stores, whereas the Musicaladers, unable to read, were imitating the newest eastern dance bands from records. They also went to big hotels and dance halls to listen to all the visiting bands, in their search for new ideas for different tricks.

When summer came again, Bing wanted a steady job for the Musicaladers more than anything. Seeing a notice in the paper that a new dance hall was to be opened on

the outskirts of town for the summer, he got Al and the two drove out in their flivver to call upon the proprietor. Bing presented his idea of having a beach setting in the center of the dance floor, using a large beach umbrella over the band, and having the players dressed in white flannel trousers and gay red and white striped blazers. Having obtained more engagements during the winter and spring playing at cafés, they had already begun to draw their following from the high school crowds, who liked their rhythm and their blare. The boys got the contract to play at the Lareida Dance Pavilion for the summer months, playing three nights a week. Each boy was paid three dollars for a night's work, and it was all fun. He enjoyed the summer hugely.

In their constant quest for new ideas, Al and Bing haunted Bailey's Music Store which permitted the boys to play dance records in one of the listening rooms for as long as they wished. Al memorized the harmony, while Bing noted the singer's style and vocal tricks. Then they would hurry home to practice and fasten the new songs in their memories.

In the nature of things, the Musicaladers' combination was short-lived. After a year or so, they disbanded when some of the boys went away to college. Al and Bing were left, however, and they continued getting engagements for their singing act.

With no special desire, but because it seemed a good way to earn a living, Bing drifted into the decision to study law. Because his mother wanted him to, he signed up for law classes at Gonzaga in his third year of college. His classes came in the mornings and on some evenings. Afternoons being free, a professor advised him to become fa-

miliar with the workings of a law office, and Bing found an office which accepted his afternoon services at a salary of thirty dollars a month.

As time went on, Bing found that he would have to make a decision. He was thinking more about music than about law. He told an uncle he'd rather sing than eat. When he saw that singing and drumming on the side brought him as much money as his part-time job in the law office, he thought he'd better devote all his energy to pushing ahead in show business. Bing and Al made plans to go south to Los Angeles and try their luck there.

Bing was twenty-one when he and Al left home in the Musicaladers' old twenty-five dollar flivver. The two boys bought the flivver for eight dollars, and they had twenty dollars between them when they started off.

Mrs. Crosby made no serious objections. By this time, she saw that her son Harry was not a law student, and she knew he would have to try himself out in the kind of show business that he fancied. One of her older sons was already living in Los Angeles, and Al Rinker's married sister, Mildred, lived there, too, so the boys would have some place to live.

The boys were hoping that through the Crosby brother and the Rinker sister they would be able to make contacts that would help them find work. Mildred was in show business herself. As Mildred Bailey, she sang jazz and blues songs. Bing said later that he learned a lot from her.

Going first to Seattle, where they wanted to hear a certain band, the boys were given an audition which resulted in some engagements at the Butler Hotel. Their songs and arrangements pleased the college crowd, and the Crosby-

Rinker team could have had more engagements there but they were eager to go on south.

After a lot of tire-changing in the course of the next week or more, the old flivver carried them to a hill about eighty miles from Los Angeles, and there blew up. Bing lifted his drums out of the back seat, and the boys thumbed a ride on a vegetable truck, leaving their wreck behind. Nearer their destination, they telephoned Mildred, who came and got them.

She did more. It was Mildred who introduced Al and Bing to persons with contacts, which resulted in new opportunities to show what they could do. They went through their routine for the director of a circuit which supplied variety acts, and impressed him so favorably that they were given a booking for the Boulevard Theatre, at \$250 to \$300 a week as a team.

Being near the University of Southern California, the Boulevard had many students in its audiences, and the young people were already thinking that Bing's delivery was "individual." They loved the Crosby-Rinker act because the music was rhythmic, fast, and hot. It was different.

The boys, being sent around the circuit more than once, enjoyed visiting southern California towns and cities. Whenever they stopped at college towns and had college boys and girls in their audiences, they received big applause. They were able to buy new clothes and they were having a good time. Constant performing before changing audiences was giving them experience. After this the boys secured a job in a musical show of specialty acts which kept them employed for some months in Los Angeles and in San Francisco.

They were at the Metropolitan, now the Paramount

Theatre, in Los Angeles, when they had their greatest stroke of luck. They came to the notice of the most renowned band leader at that time in America, Paul Whiteman. The two boys from Spokane were thrilled to find that their ideal—Paul Whiteman himself, with his band—was there the same week, and they anticipated most eagerly hearing Ferde Grofé's new arrangements, which Whiteman played. Their theatre was not far up the street from the one where Whiteman's band was playing. They went and sat in humble and awed admiration. Here was their kind of music executed to perfection. Could they ever, they wondered, be as good? So inspired were they by what they had heard, that they returned to their own theatre and gave the hottest rendition of their songs they had yet achieved, the best they had ever done.

Some members of the Whiteman Band went into the theatre, heard the Crosby-Rinker routine, and reported to the leader, who sent for the boys to come and see him. In his dressing-room, Bing and Al, excited and flattered, sang some of their songs for him.

Here was indeed their biggest moment so far for, to their surprise and intense delight, the master himself offered them a job with him when they should have completed their contract. They walked on air. To be with Whiteman's Band was big time. There was none bigger for the music that was fast, hot, and loud. That Whiteman engaged these western boys was proof that their feeling for the new style of popular music was in the mode and that they already had something to offer.

They were to meet Whiteman in Chicago for their première with his renowned band. Bing was terribly nervous over his first appearance as big time. It seems to have been

the only time that he ever felt shaky about a performance. On their way to the big city of the Midwest, it had seemed to Bing and Al that their routine was countrified and naive.

Whiteman appeared in their dressing-room to encourage them, saying, "Music's the same all over. They liked you in Los Angeles and they'll like you here." But they remained scared and nervous until they were out on the stage and "got into a groove"—a new phrase that came in with hot music to mean a state of complete sympathy, rapport, and correct mood—in the rhythm of their first number. All went well. The nervousness had been needless. Chicago audiences were delighted with them.

Disappointment was still to come, however. Though the boys were smash hits in midwestern cities such as St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, where they performed on their way to New York, the audiences of the Paramount Theatre on Broadway were cold toward them. Though their new reputation had preceded them, their first number in the theatre was greeted with decidedly faint applause. The same distinct coolness remained after their second and third numbers. The manager, regarding them a complete flop, asked Mr. Whiteman to remove them from the bill entirely.

Hopes that had been sky-high were now trailing in the dust. Mr. Whiteman was kind, tried to console them, suggested that they work up some new numbers.

At this time Whiteman was doing a lot of recording, and Bing and Al were in the vocal ensembles. Bing was given some solos to do, (one was "Ol' Man River") and these created favorable comment. But their failure on Paramount's stage shattered the boys' confidence.

What built it up again was their new association with

Harry Barris, a song writer and player of hot piano, who was performing with success in one of the night clubs. After he joined the Whiteman band, the leader suggested that Barris, Crosby, and Rinker form a trio. As Whiteman's Rhythm Boys, they were much applauded, their first success being their treatment of a song written by Barris, called "Mississippi Mud."

Whiteman's Rhythm Boys made recordings in which they were assisted by some of the most popular instrumentalists of hot music, Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey and the late Bix Biederbecke. They also performed at social affairs in New York late at night, after Club Whiteman closed.

Temperamentally they were not ready for success, however, and began to grow careless. They relaxed on their rehearsing, and consequently failed to produce new material fast enough. For an act such as theirs was, they should have been developing new material all the time. Since they were, therefore, ill equipped to go along on the next tour of his band, Whiteman booked his Rhythm Boys for a vaudeville tour of the East and Midwest. Bing had only had a peep into big time. He wasn't there yet.

On the tour, the Rhythm Boys alternated weeks of success with weeks of dismal failures. But Bing was never really a worrier. Instead of rehearsing and working on the act, he played golf every morning he could find a course. He had a good time; responsibilities did not weigh him down. Once their irresponsible ways found them in Nashville, Tennessee, when they should have been performing in Columbus, Ohio. By the time they reached Columbus, they had missed the first three days of their engagement. When they began to dilute their singing act with what they thought were jokes and comic stunts, theatre man-

agers began to complain. The boys were not nearly so funny to other people as they were to themselves. Finally, in one theatre, the curtain closed before their act was over, and the manager told them they were finished.

When Paul Whiteman returned from his tour, he signed the boys up for a picture which he was to make in Hollywood, to be called *The King of Jazz*. Prospects then looked bright for a while. They had a wonderful trip to the coast in the Band's special train. At some cities on the way, they stopped to make special broadcasts. In Hollywood, Bing was happy to find opportunity for much golf. They rehearsed for weekly broadcasts, but time passed by and no picture was ever started. Then they found that no story for the picture had been written! In those years, money was so plentiful in Hollywood, while ideas were not, that vast sums were squandered with no results.

Whiteman's Band finally returned to New York without having made the picture. This time, Bing's brother Everett, in Los Angeles, thought Bing should remain there and try for something himself in the movies. Bing, who had no hope of anything like that, thought the results of his screen tests were very poor.

A few weeks later, some one submitted a story for the *King of Jazz* picture which seemed workable. Back the band went to Hollywood. After much struggle, for in those days sound films were new, the picture was made. Bing was to have sung one song, a large production number which was another stroke of luck for him, but when the time came to shoot his picture, he was in jail.

While driving an actress home after a party given in Whiteman's honor, to celebrate the first week's work on the picture, Bing had put out his hand to indicate that he

was turning into a driveway. But the car behind crashed into him and he and his companion were thrown out. The other driver, being drunk, was to blame but, unfortunately, Bing chose the wrong moment to rely upon the judge's sense of humor. When Bing gave him a light answer, the judge clapped him in jail. He had lost his first big chance on the screen.

When the picture was finished, Bing and his two partners in rhythm appeared with Whiteman's Band in several engagements in western cities, but when the band returned East, it was without the Rhythm Boys. Whiteman did not think Bing took his work seriously enough.

Bing then appealed to a booking agent, who succeeded in getting The Rhythm Boys—no longer Whiteman's—an engagement in the Montmartre Café in Los Angeles. Lady Luck returned to them here, to reward them, no doubt, for having worked up new songs and improved their act. They suddenly caught on. People began talking about them. It was here, too, that another lady entered Bing's life, when Dixie Lee, a Fox Films movie actress, came to see and hear The Rhythm Boys. Before long, Bing was in love.

Soon after they became a fad, the Rhythm Boys joined Gus Arnheim's Band at the Coconut Grove. Luck followed Bing there. The Grove had a radio outlet two hours each night, at which Bing sang over the air for the first time. As the boys began to win a radio audience, their popularity spread.

While they were at the Grove, Barris wrote two songs that were to boost Bing's popularity as well as his own. When he finished one called "It Must Be True" and showed it to his partner, the crooner thought it had a great

swing to it. Barris thereupon handed it to the bandleader to have an orchestral arrangement made. The first night Bing sang it, the song was a hit. Couples stopped dancing and crowded round him in front of the orchestra. He sang it with a lilt that made them sway. That evening began a period of marked popularity for the Grove, and a turning point in the Crosby career. "It Must Be True" was soon to lead Bing Crosby to astonishing success.

When, after the New Year, Bing presented a new song of Barris's, called "I Surrender, Dear," the applause drowned out the orchestra. Using a microphone, the singer could whisper his tones so softly as to seem to be crooning into each ear, everyone could hear him. Young people adored his style, and soon the Grove was doing more business than it had ever done.

Luck came to the crooner again when Mack Sennett approached him, also at the Grove, and made him an offer. Sennett's specialty was short films, and he was considering an idea for musical shorts for which he wished to develop Bing for leading man. Bing made several shorts and received \$600 for each one.

Encouraged by these successes, he felt that perhaps he now had a chance of reaching his star. His star was Dixie Lee, whose real name was Wilma Wyatt. As her future looked more promising than his own, Bing had refrained from pressing the matter, but now that he was definitely earning enough to support a wife, he proposed to Dixie, he says, over a plate of chicken at the Grove. Dixie had more faith in Bing than those who told her she would have to support him if she married him, and they were married in the Blessed Sacrament Church on Sunset Bou-

levard. Bing says it was a case of Miss Big marrying Mr. Little. He was now twenty-six.

Brother Everett had been watching Bing's progress closely. Knowing that Bing's singing, broadcasted from the Grove, had been very popular on the West Coast, he was eager to see Bing try for a place on one of the national broadcasting systems. Bing himself was not in favor of the idea. Fearing he would not make the grade, he did not want to go to New York. But Everett sent two records of Bing's, "I Surrender, Dear" and "Just One More Chance," to Columbia Broadcasting System. Then Everett was asked to bring Bing to New York for an audition.

Bing now appreciates the push his brother gave him at the time he needed one, considering it just one more of the many lucky breaks he has had. Everett became his manager in big time, when he signed Bing with CBS on a sustaining program. Only five years had passed since Al and Bing had left home in their flivver to see if they could sell their music. Now Bing was in big time.

While waiting for negotiations to be completed before his first big broadcast, the crooner liked to visit the night clubs. He would drop into four or five of an evening and always sing a little tune. He never thought of saving his voice, never thought of the possibility of overworking his vocal cords. He sang because he liked to sing. This kind of procedure also robbed him of sleep. On the day of the opening broadcast, he rehearsed for the first time in an air-conditioned room. His throat rebelled at the punishment he had been giving it, and tightened up. His voice soon became a mere croak. Everybody was alarmed.

The throat specialist to whom he was rushed said Bing had damaged his vocal cords. He could not sing that night,

nor for several nights. The studio had to announce regretfully that Bing Crosby would be unable to sing on account of illness. His first big break on radio—and he had to drop out.

When the studio had to make the same announcement on the two following nights, Bing was in despair. He told his brother to cancel all contracts. After the brothers had argued for a while, Everett showed Bing a telegram he had received from their mother. It said that she was worried about his cold, but that she was praying for him and would be listening. She had asked the Sisters to pray for him too. Bing changed his mind.

On the fourth evening, he went to the studio with Everett. Eddie Lang was there waiting. Eddie was the guitarist whom Bing had known with the Whiteman Band, and it was Eddie's accompaniment he wanted for the broadcast. There was a short rehearsal. Though Bing made a few breaks, Everett decided he must go on then and there. With his hand on Eddie's shoulder, his forehead wet with perspiration, Bing sang his first fifteen minutes on a national hookup. As soon as it was over, he went back to his hotel.

His wife had retired and Bing was reading a book when Everett burst into the room, throwing a sheaf of telegrams on the table. One hundred and fifty had already come in. Bing was a hit! The wire from his mother said he had been fine, and she was glad he was all right. Bing felt that any success was due to all the praying that had been done on his account.

From this point onward, Bing Crosby's path led to big and ever bigger time. His manager-brother got him an engagement at the Paramount in New York, where he had

failed so dismally with Al Rinker on their first visit to Broadway. While he was appearing there on the stage, the first of Mack Sennett's shorts, "I Surrender, Dear," was showing in two theatres on Broadway. Critics were now calling Bing Crosby the most popular baritone on the air. He was "the rage of the radio hour." A few months later, Everett negotiated with Paramount Pictures for Bing to star in five feature pictures, during the next three years, for a total fee of \$300,000.

It was during the Paramount engagement which lasted for twenty-nine weeks that Bing, for a time, was really frightened about his voice. Doing several shows a day, plus one or two broadcasts in the evenings, plus benefit performances and recordings, all in addition to his singing for fun in the night clubs, his overworked voice became "gravelly." Having never had voice instruction, he had probably never been told that a singer's voice is a delicate instrument, whose use requires care and restraint. Bing has said that he was singing daily over a sixteen-hour stretch. No voice could take such a beating. Bing's voice was becoming so foggy that he sought the help of a throat specialist, who explained what had happened to his vocal cords.

From overuse, the cords had grown calluses, called nodes. After being scared at the idea of a possible operation, Bing was advised to rest his voice for two weeks, and not even talk more than was absolutely necessary. His inflamed vocal cords responded to the rest, his voice came back, but it was a tone or more lower.

Bing's audiences were interested in his new voice. Moreover, he had by now achieved a style of his own. He had

something that others would imitate. He was about to soar to new heights in Hollywood.

Crosby had his own ideas about how he wished to be launched in pictures. He knew he was not an actor, and did not pretend to be one. His shorts had shown that he had good comedy sense, but he did not want to carry a big feature picture himself. He was now in a position where he could say what he wanted. And what he wanted was good stories for his pictures, first class casts around him, and only parts that suited his own personality. He said, "I'm a singer and if I'm going to get by in pictures, it's going to be as a singer, with about as much acting as you could expect from a guy standing in front of a microphone." He was not fooling himself.

Since then, Bing Crosby has made hundreds of records—so many that he has stopped buying them himself—and he has been in many pictures. In 1944, he received the Oscar, Hollywood's coveted award, for the year's best performance. Years after he and Al left home to start out on their own, Bing returned to the old home town and was given an honorary degree from Gonzaga. By this time he was "the voice everyone knows" Listening to Al Jolson's records as a boy and thinking how nice it would be to "make a lot of dough" singing, he never dreamed of the fabulous sums his singing was to bring him. His career brought him such an immense fortune and property that his father and brothers had their jobs helping him to handle it all. At home, he and Dixie had four sons to raise.

Besides golf, horse-racing became a great hobby after Bing was able to afford it. He acquired his own extensive stables and race-track. In the early 'forties he made a trip to Argentina to buy race horses. On the voyage, passen-

gers were surprised to see Bing Crosby acting as altar boy, during Mass in the ship's chapel.

When the war came, Bing wanted to join the Army or the Navy, but he was told officially that he could help more by giving his time and talents to entertaining the soldiers and sailors and raising war bond sales.

Bing's friends say that his most marked characteristic has always been his ability to remain constantly relaxed. With many interests, he has always been busy and has accomplished a great deal, but he has never appeared to fuss or to be in a hurry. This enviable quality of his was apparently what fooled his grade teachers into thinking he was lazy, when he was a little tyke. But no lazy person could have accomplished so much or taken part in so many different activities. Strange to say, the relaxed Bing, who has always preferred the less strenuous games, once expressed the wish that he could dance like Fred Astaire.

He was lunching with Astaire on the day his Hollywood house burned down. Informed by telephone what was happening, he made sure his wife and children were safe. Then he calmly remarked he would stay to finish luncheon with his friend. When he returned to the place where his fine house had stood, he kicked around among the ashes and found one of his shoes, in which he had placed a thousand dollars for some special purpose. The money was still there. It was another of those Crosby "breaks."

The microphone opened the way to careers for singers who had never studied voice. Crosby grew up at just the right time to sing into a little mike, using a whispering voice and still be heard by a million ears. He started the microphone style of singing, which came to be called croon-

ing, a word that implies the intimacy of the special Crosby style. Bing and the radio grew up together.

Though Crosby never bothered to study music—he says he's no musician—and never attended a course in drama, in these two fields he has earned great wealth and made himself famous. Even the Germans, hearing his records and broadcasts, have their special name for him—Der Bingle.

People who work with him enjoy doing so, for with Bing they always have a good time. He is himself aware of the vast distance he has traveled, from playing drums and singing with the Musicaladers to being the rage of radio and Hollywood's star in musical films, and he has said that only in America could he have accomplished it. He says he's been lucky.

Looking back over his career, the crooner sees so many turning points where something just "happened" that was fortuitous, and helped him up the next rung of the ladder to success. He says, "Every man's life is the result of what happens when his life touches the lives of others, and a long list of people have influenced my life in one way or another. Sometimes . . . they've helped me achieve things I never would have accomplished otherwise."

What would he have done, for instance, if Bailey's Music Store had not allowed him to come in and play records to his heart's content? He thinks he was lucky with his part-time jobs in Spokane where he got to see Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, and other popular performers. He learned a lot, he says, from Al's sister, Mildred Bailey. He was lucky in his association with Whiteman, from whose band musicians he picked up new ideas when he hung around listening to their talk. Brother Everett encouraged him

when he most needed encouragement. Looking farther back, Bing concludes that he was lucky in his own childhood home, and his parents with their special characteristics and love of light music.

Bing's mother, however, does not agree with him. She says it was not luck, but rather the result of all the prayers that were said for him.

In one way Bing was out of Hollywood style, for in that milieu, where so few marriages have been successful, Bing and his Dixie succeeded. Their vows lasted until Bing suffered the tragic loss of his wife by her untimely death at the beginning of middle age.

A happy hunter and fisherman, the crooner has hunted and fished for almost every game animal, bird, and fish North America provides. He likes a stream the best, because the flashing ways of the rainbow trout have given him "the greatest thrill of them all"

His greatest satisfaction, however, was being able to provide for his father the last ten or fifteen years of his life, so that he could do the things he liked best—the things he had wanted to do all his life.

HILDEGARDE

✧ *Chanteuse* ✧

“**H**ILDY, you simply must see Jerry and her Baby Grands—you’d love them. Today’s their last day and you must go.”

Hildy’s friend Alice had spoken. She was referring to an act that was playing that week at the vaudeville. Alice knew, of course, that her friend was studying piano with the idea of becoming a professional pianist, and knew that she would like the show. What neither one of them knew was that this advice of Alice’s was to be for Hildy the first important turning point in her life. It was the beginning of her search for a career.

Hildegard Loretta Sell was not in any way an unusual girl. Born in a small town in Wisconsin, she spent her childhood years in another small town, but when she was twelve, her family moved to Milwaukee, where, naturally, there were more opportunities for growing girls.

The father, who could fiddle a bit and play the drums in the town band, kept a grocery store. His parents had come to America from Denmark. His wife’s parents had come from Switzerland and the border of France. The young couple of first-generation Americans had settled, among many of the emigrants from Western Europe and

Scandinavia, in Wisconsin where they lived almost a pioneer life.

Hildegarde's mother had a glorious voice, at least her daughter thought so. She would have loved to sing professionally, but her own mother had not believed in singing as a career. She was of the opinion that one should sing only for the Church and the glory of God. Hildegarde's mother had had to be content with playing the organ in church. As it was quite the thing then for all little girls to take music lessons, Hildegarde and her two sisters had piano lessons when they were children.

Sometimes Hildy had to tend the store for her father, but she did not like it any more than she liked washing dishes. She liked to have fun and not practice too hard, though she preferred piano practice to washing dishes.

Movies were a new kind of entertainment then, and every town had its Lyric, its Bijou, its Dreamland, or its Star. Admission was five cents. Later, though admission went up to ten and fifteen cents, the movies were still silent. Talkies and sound effects came many years later. While the silent pantomime of the screen went on, it was customary to have a pianist sit just below and in front of the screen, to play a running accompaniment to the pictures. The pianist had to follow the scenes and be able to switch from mood to mood—playing loud, fast, agitated music during fights, storms, and the inevitable chase; mournful music for sad scenes; quiet, tender music for love scenes.

One day, Mrs. Sell went to the Lyric Theatre to see the moving pictures, and she thought the pianist's playing was no better than her 13-year-old Hildegarde could do. She made arrangements for Hildy to play for the movies in the

Lyric afternoons after school. She got a dollar every time, which gave her a little more spending money.

After graduating from the parochial high school, Hildegarde went to Marquette University, in Milwaukee, where she majored in music. She thought she would be a pianist, but by the time she was nineteen, she discovered that a musical education was very expensive. When family funds no longer sufficed, even though she helped herself with a part-time job selling notions in a department store, she left Marquette after a year or so. Then came the day, in the mid-1920's, when Alice told her not to miss "Jerry and her Baby Grands" at the vaudeville.

The rising curtain disclosed four white small-sized grand pianos. Four girls appeared, dressed in pretty colonial costumes with billowing skirts. They sat down at the pianos and all played together. Hildy thought the act was lovely. Wouldn't that be an attractive way, she thought, to earn money!

On the spur of the moment she decided to go behind the scene and speak to Jerry. She told the vaudeville pianist how much she liked the act—in fact, she liked it so much she wished she could play in it. Would there ever be a chance? Jerry invited Hildegarde to play something for her. Hildegarde complied, whereupon Jerry said that, if she ever needed another pianist, she would let her know.

Apparently Jerry had expressed no great enthusiasm, or else Hildegarde was not one to count her chickens before they hatched, for she went home thinking, "Oh, I'll never hear from her." But Hildegarde had made her first important contact, as she was soon to discover.

After three weeks, a telegram came, probably the first Hildegarde had ever received. It was from Jerry. Jerry had

two piano acts on the road, the one she herself appeared in, and also a junior act. One of the players in the junior act had had to drop out, just as the act was scheduled to open in Springfield, Massachusetts. Would Hildegarde go there at once to join the company? Hildegarde would!

Here was her chance, but her father objected. Her mother, on the other hand, remembering how she herself had longed for a singing career and had never been allowed to try it, would not stand in her daughter's way. With her mother's blessing, at least, the young girl left home and Milwaukee, and traveled almost halfway across the country to join the troupe in Springfield.

The junior pianists also appeared on the stage in colonial costume, but as boys instead of girls. Hildegarde still remembers her pretty light blue satin knee-length pants, long-tailed coat, and white wig

For two years, Hildegarde traveled with the piano-playing vaudeville act, before it was discontinued. Styles in light entertainment were changing. Vaudeville, as a popular type of entertainment, was in its last years, being crowded out by the ever growing popularity of the moving pictures. She got other jobs as accompanist for vaudeville singers and dancers. But the engagements did not last long and, between times, she would be laid off. During one period when she had no work in show business, she got a job as a song plugger for \$17 a week in Irving Berlin's music publishing office. There she met George Gershwin, Joe Laurie, Jr., and many people of Tin Pan Alley, some of whom proved to be helpful to her later on. These were contacts, and contacts are important.

While she was playing a vaudeville engagement with a comedienne named Dora Early, Hildegarde made the

luckiest contact of her whole life. It happened quite by chance. The temporary partners went to Camden, New Jersey, to fulfill an engagement at the Lyric Theatre. Another Lyric for Hildegarde! Not having money enough to stay at the best hotel, they took rooms at the boarding house of Mrs. Sosenko. Her daughter, Anna, still in school, viewed with delicious awe a girl—only a few years older than herself—who was already in what she considered the glamorous world of the theatre. The dark-haired Anna with the sparkling eyes, thought the fair-haired, smiling Hildegarde, a “comer.” It seems quite amazing that Anna, very young and inexperienced, could even then have discerned a certain “something” in Hildegarde’s performance, which was in the future to make older heads in show business pause and consider. But then, Anna was an amazing girl. The meeting of these two should have been attended by a roll of drums, considering what came of it, though in fact no star fell to mark its importance for them. The days went on as before.

To enable the comedienne to get off stage and change her costume, Hildegarde had been given a solo singing spot. Though she was not a singer and had never considered herself one, she was willing to undertake what was required of her. Anna, who naturally went to see her mother’s roomers do their act, thought Hildegarde’s singing had peculiar appeal and a haunting quality. Feelings of regard were mutual, for Hildegarde thought Anna a brilliant girl. She had even written a song that Hildegarde liked.

The two began a correspondence. Anna’s letters must have been encouraging to Hildegarde, for she remembers that they not only stimulated her, but taught her a great deal. When Anna finished school, eager to study journal-

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ism and be a writer, she succeeded in getting a job on the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*.

Three more years passed, with Hildegarde doing vaudeville turns whenever she could find engagements. Then came the financial crash of 1929. In the next few years, many people who had known better days were standing on the street corners in New York, selling apples. Money was very scarce. One day Anna, having gone to New York to look for work on a newspaper there, stopped at a corner to buy an apple for her lunch, and lo, Hildegarde walked by! It was their first meeting since Camden. There was much to tell each other. Hildegarde, depressed with a long lay-off, said she was always having contract trouble because she had no head for business.

"You need a manager," suggested Anna.

Hildegarde smiled. "Let's team up together."

The girls pooled their efforts, and ever since then the two have worked together, ideally partnered, each the complement of the other. Without Anna, Hildegarde would not have been the present Hildegarde. Without Hildegarde, Anna would not perhaps have done the kind of work in which she, too, has had great success. As a team they climbed the long, hard hill at whose summit, for the professional entertainer, is the SOLD OUT hall.

The road was not easy. They went through hard times, but hard times were easier when Hildegarde had Anna behind her, pushing.

One contact invariably leads to another. The second most helpful and encouraging person, who proved a friend indeed, Hildegarde met through Joe Laurie, Jr., whom she had known while she was plugging songs in Irving Berlin's song factory. This was Gus Edwards, a producer of vaude-

ville units. Edwards had the knack of being able to spot talent. He had been the discoverer of many who later became star entertainers, Eddie Cantor and George Jessel among others. Like Anna Sosenko, Gus Edwards saw something "different" in Hildegarde's performance. He was the one who advised her to drop her long name and use only her first one. Edwards could see a time coming, he said, when her name would be displayed in lights, and the single name of Hildegarde would have distinction. He told her she had talent, and backed up his words by engaging her for his review, *Stars on Parade*. Presented as a gawky immigrant Dutch girl, she sang "Listen to the German Band" with a funny German accent Edwards taught her. She came to regard this as her lucky song, for some years. She also sang a great hit of the period—"Two Hearts in Waltz Time."

Touring with Edwards for two years, Hildegarde learned a great deal. She was his last protégée. *Stars on Parade* made the Midwest circuit and showed in Milwaukee. Then Hildegarde made her first professional bow in her home town. Her father, very ill, was brought to the theatre to see her, for the first and only time.

Sometime afterward, Hildegarde, again out of a job in New York, was walking down the street, dressed in a pink suit and pretty hat. Greta Garbo was at that time the most popular Hollywood star, and when Hildegarde heard a passer-by remark, obviously referring to herself, "There goes Garbo," she stepped along with an added air of pleased assurance and well-being, feeling distinctly flattered. Just then she met her theatrical agent, who stopped to ask, "How would you like to come and sing for Mr. Poulson?"

The director of London's Café de Paris, Martinius Poulson, had come to New York looking for new talent. Anna, now Hildegarde's partner-friend-confidante-adviser, thought it was definitely the thing to do.

At the audition, several hundred hopefuls demonstrated their wares. Hildegarde chose to sing "Listen to the German Band," and she was the one selected to go to London! It seemed too good to be true.

Edwards advised her to go, saying that her surest way to fame would be by way of Europe. But she was not to get there just yet. Her father's health had steadily declined, and she did not want to leave the country. The following spring her father died. Sometime afterward, Mr. Poulson renewed his offer. Hildegarde borrowed \$150 for passage money, and she and Anna departed for foreign shores. They never imagined, when they left to fulfill an engagement of a few weeks, that three years were to pass before they would return.

The opening, one September evening in 1933, in London's Café de Paris, was something those two girls never forgot. Hildegarde flopped. She failed to please the patrons. Smart English society, being used to the smooth and polished work of such light entertainment artists as Beatrice Lillie and Gertrude Lawrence, was utterly bored by the efforts of a green girl from the vaudeville circuits of the eastern United States. It was a painful experience.

Hildegarde saw what was happening and realized that she had been pushed up into the top rank of experienced and famous entertainers too soon. She'd gotten ahead of herself. She was scared, and self-conscious too, seeing that other entertainers wore jewels and gowns that were creations, while she had to appear in her little twenty-five dol-

lar white satin readymade dress. She herself admits that she was then very mediocre.

Important New York theatrical figures, whom she had already met, were there that fatal evening—among them Gilbert Miller and Cole Porter, “seeing me die.” Embarrassed for her, one of them called out to her to sing “Listen to the German Band.” She did, and this one number was successful.

It was a bad moment for Mr. Poulson, too. People asked him why he had brought a girl, so obviously lacking in experience, from America to fashionable Piccadilly. Distressed though he was, he did not blame Hildegarde. On the contrary, she remembered ever after his kindly sympathy and encouraging words. Admitting that he was being censured on all sides, he nevertheless maintained that she had talent. He told her that he had only booked her ten years too soon! In some future time, he felt quite sure, she would be returning in triumph to his Café de Paris. Telling her never to forget that she possessed the requirements for success, he added, “Success is a combination of many things.”

At the end of the London engagement, the girls were out of funds again. Expenses had swallowed up the salary. Moreover, Hildegarde could earn no more at that time in England. The British labor law prohibited a foreigner from earning British money for more than a four-week period at one time.

Anna suggested going across the Channel to Paris, and on the advice of their agent, Hildegarde undertook a two-week engagement at a cabaret there.

The opening in Paris was more successful. The *boite*, a French term for a small entertainment salon, was chic, but

Hildegarde's schedule was tedious, her first performance starting at eleven at night, and her last after daybreak. However, it did not last long, for the cabaret suddenly closed. Hildegarde was out of a job once more.

The girls could not even pay their hotel bill. Returning one day, Hildegarde found her room door locked against her—clothes and luggage inside. She could not remain or even get her things, the proprietor said, until she paid her bill. When matters were then at their worst, the hotel's cashier came to their aid offering to pay the bill for them. He had seen, he said, how hard they were trying to find work. It is interesting to note that even at this time the girls did not look for a cheaper hotel. Hildegarde had been advised to stay always at good hotels if she wanted to be engaged by the best establishments. A good, respectable address was a necessity. No matter how low they were in funds, they always stayed at good hotels.

After a lean period of about six weeks, Hildegarde began to find engagements here and there, in Paris night clubs, cabarets, and music halls. She knew the bitter experience of being fired without having been paid. Out of the money she did receive, Anna spent all that could be spared on the two most important items for Hildegarde's career: her clothes and her publicity. With Anna squeezing out every possible centime on advertising Hildegarde, the girls never seemed to get enough ahead to buy a passage home. They had learned, by their mortifying lesson in London, that the raiment of a chanteuse is a highly important item. Exquisite gowns were part of the attraction. Hildegarde had to have fine gowns, and she had to learn how to wear them.

Engaged by the British Broadcasting Company to do a series of broadcasts, Hildegarde commuted once a month

between Paris and London. It was a great effort to make for a single radio engagement, especially as each Channel crossing meant a bout of seasickness, but Anna, the manager, realized how important it was for Hildegarde's name to become known.

All the time, the two were studying to improve Hildegarde's act. At first, Hildegarde used to sit at the piano and sing her songs to her own accompaniment. Then she was advised to have an accompanist, so that she could stand up and show herself. Then she was told not to look up when she sang, but to look her audience in the face. "Be natural, be yourself," she was told. "Get intimate" was another piece of advice she followed.

It is probable that the "get intimate" idea was born for her in Paris. The French have always been fond of the small show—the little, intimate box-hall where even the last row is not more than a large living room's length away from the stage. When they go to see a comedian, a song-and-joke artist like Maurice Chevalier, they want to be able to see every little change of expression. A French comedian will make comments to people in the audience, as if everyone knew everyone else. This kind of intimacy was what Hildegarde worked for in her own performances.

Anna, watching closely each time Hildegarde performed, noted each gesture, each bit of timing, each small detail, which seemed effective and pleasing to the audience. She pointed out bits of business Hildegarde was to retain, as well as superfluous ones she was to discard. It was Anna who drilled Hildegarde in gestures, steps and manners. For a time, Hildegarde was self-conscious about it, but Anna would insist, and Hildegarde had such profound respect for her friend's judgment, that she would abide by it

faithfully It was Anna who spent the money on Hildegarde's publicity. It was Anna who built up a reputation for Hildegarde before she really had one. When people began to hear and read about "the incomparable Hildegarde" it was Anna back of it. Miss Sosenko later admitted, "I made her a sensation before she was a sensation" It was a great feat of salesmanship. Anna kept the press services deluged with Hildegarde items. She was learning fast how to advertise and sell Hildegarde's entertainment.

It was while they were in Paris that Hildegarde created her nostalgic interpretation of *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, which Jerome Kern admired. Those three years of ups and downs taught both girls a great deal. They had an opportunity to see and hear everything in the entertainment of that gay meeting place of Europe. They had the best opportunity to learn French, to visit the fine museums of art. It was, of course, the perfect city in which to study clothes and fashion. Anna studied Hildegarde, and she studied the most effective lighting and manner of presentation of her show. Though Hildegarde went in debt and was paying off her loans for several years, that first European experience was without price. Hildegarde says she learned everything she knows in just one school, the School of Experience.

One night the late King Gustav of Sweden, then 76 years old, stopped at the Club Casanova, while Hildegarde was appearing there. Her smiling, gay, effervescent snap alternating with nostalgic, dreamy moods—creating what has been called her bewildering change of pace—quite enchanted the King. Some months later, again in Paris, he visited the same cabaret, but the American chanteuse,

whose charm he remembered, was no longer there. The King made inquiries of the manager, who was much upset. Hildegarde had not seemed very good and he had let her go. He quickly told the King that, if his Majesty would return the next night, he would have Hildegarde there to perform for him. The distracted manager scoured Paris, next day, for Hildegarde. He found her at last, and she went to the Casanova that night to do her first request performance for Royalty. Among the request numbers she sang "You Ought to be in Pictures," "Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?" and her little good luck song, "Listen to the German Band."

Here was a good story—one of the best. Anna made the most of it. Requests for Hildegarde began to come in. She had been in demand—by Royalty, no less. After this, her success mounted. Behind it was Anna Sosenko, pushing hard, never losing faith in her friend's ability to rise to the top, managing her business, a dynamo of energy.

While Hildegarde was singing during the cocktail hour at the Boeuf sur le Toit, in Paris, an English agent, who had witnessed the London fiasco the year before, noting her vast improvement, engaged her to appear at the Ritz in London during the festivities occasioned by the wedding of the late Duke of Kent. She was working at the Scheherazade in Paris again, when she received an offer to play opposite the English comedian, Leslie Hansen, in a musical comedy called *Seeing Stars* at the Gaiety in London, the star—Florence Desmond—having come down with a case of make-up poisoning. This was a great opportunity, and Hildegarde knew it; but after that experience, which lasted for four months, she also knew that musical comedy was not for her. Doing exactly the same thing at each per-

formance, conforming to a set program in every detail was not appealing. She was more at ease when she could decide, as she went along, what numbers to sing from her whole repertoire. It was more *intime*; it gave spontaneity. She was a one-woman show, and she could get closer to her audience.

Opportunities now came with more frequency. Hildegard was the first American entertainer to receive a long-term contract to appear on the BBC programs. She was appearing in the better night clubs of London and Paris and her clientèle was what is called smart café society. She was the first foreign performer to be on a Paris television program. During the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary, the chanteuse entertained many members of the royal family. She toured Great Britain's music halls, and appeared also in Belgium and Holland. In the autumn of that year she was in an English film as well as British television.

Her performance had gained polish and authority. She was becoming more smooth, her timing and presentation had acquired poise. In other words, she now gave a professional performance. She was no longer the green, inexperienced new-comer from the halls of small-time vaudeville. Her gowns were Paris creations. No more was she to be embarrassed by the twenty-five dollar dress in an environment where what she wore was of paramount interest to the spectators. This alone naturally helped to give her poise and confidence. Her performance was no longer strained; she seemed at ease, and she dearly loved an audience.

By this time, news items on Hildegard were floating across the Atlantic. Americans visiting Europe had seen

her. The vaudeville girl from Milwaukee had blossomed into a mature artiste. Her show had style. She and Anna had learned that it was the manner which counts. The how to was even more important than the what. The two returned to New York after three years' absence. Gus Edwards had been right. Hildy's way to fame had been by way of Europe.

The National Broadcasting Company gave Hildegarde a contract for eighteen performances at the highest fee for that time. She also appeared as guest on other radio programs, and performed in the Supper Rooms of the Waldorf and Ritz Carlton Hotels. But alas, even yet, New York frequenters of late night entertainment places were not sent, as the saying is, by Hildegarde. Their opinions were reserved. Paris could have her. For New York, she would have to improve still more. NBC was disappointed, to put it mildly. So were her agents. So were Hildegarde and Anna. What did they do? They accepted the verdict, and worked harder than ever on the presentation of Hildegarde's individual kind of show.

The next year, the two went again to London to fulfill engagements during more regal festivities. This time it was the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Sometime afterward, back again in New York, hardly anyone remembered Hildegarde. The public's memory is very short. She had a few unimportant engagements, and appearances at private parties. Then came an offer for a two-week engagement at the Versailles Restaurant. But they offered her only \$400 a week, whereas she had been receiving \$1000 a week from hotel engagements the year before. The question was: Would it be a wise thing to accept such a reduction? On the other hand, the Versailles had a

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certain stamp; there was a certain glory attached to a Versailles engagement and that was worth considering. Anna advised acceptance.

How could anyone have foreseen that this was to be the magical time and place for a brilliant New York success? It was the beginning of really big time for Hildegarde.

Then followed the most successful European tour so far. On her return, she was offered a glittering opportunity, a long-term contract at the Savoy Plaza in New York. She was to appear twenty weeks a year for four years. Now she could settle down with a feeling of security, which she and Anna had never yet had, and attend to the business of trying to attract a following. The years of plugging, of overcoming discouragements, of surmounting temporary setbacks, while sticking determinedly to her goal, were now to be rewarded.

Hildegarde and all variety entertainers discovered that, when the vaudeville circuits died out and when the repeal of Prohibition permitted supper clubs, cocktail lounges, and night clubs (the cabarets of former times) to do business again, these were the places which absorbed the performers of variety acts. Both her unfolding career and the changing times led Hildegarde into café society entertainment. When she joined that troupe of Jerry's in Springfield she had no idea of the type of performance she was going to develop eventually.

Then came the making of records, and seven years after her first London engagement, Hildegarde was beginning to have a yearly income of over \$100,000. Two years later, Anna decided that Hildegarde should be seen in other American cities and arranged appearances in smart hotels throughout the country.

When Hildegarde returned to the Savoy Plaza she had, according to the gossip columns, become a cult. She now had a following all her own. She broke Supper Club records for drawing people; and, though her kind of setting did not see the SOLD OUT sign in a box office, people stood in lines to reserve tables, which amounts to the same thing. The papers said that she had developed showmanship in the highest degree. She had an unfailing instinct for the dramatic, for being able to capitalize on the unexpected. She was called the "personality gal." Her admirers said, "she gives it, and gives it, and gives it."

Hildegarde took singing lessons after she had arrived in big time, but she did not have a voice. She says she never pretended to have a voice. She used what she had. She was another who would rather sing than eat, and she kept up to the "latest thing" in her songs. She made the most of contrast, of creating moods and changing them suddenly. Her gowns came to be something to see in themselves. She gave herself special trademarks in the long gloves she always has made to wear with each gown; the large lace handkerchief she always carries; the armful of roses which she dispenses, one by one, among her charmed circle. Improvising each performance, she has no set program, unless it is her own program of spontaneity. She announces what she will do just before she is ready to do it. Exuberant and gay, she prattles with her audience.

Hildegarde does not like to take vacations. She would rather work, rather sing. She admits to feeling a bit nervous, even now, before starting a performance, but that is just part of the night's work. What she loves most is the audience. "There is no thrill," she says, "as great as holding an audience."

The most remarkable and unusual thing about this career story is the combined work of the two girls, through the hard years, to make the dream they shared come true, one a Catholic from the Middle West, the other a Jewish girl from New Jersey.

Miss Sosenko does all the booking, argues with all kinds of managers, checks the baggage, sits behind the orchestra, and handles the lighting for the show. It was she who hit upon the idea of using trick spotlights to enhance effects. She judges the audiences and gives Hildegarde suggestions. She can rehearse the band, or mend the rips and tears in evening gowns. She even wrote the song that came to be Hildegarde's signature, *Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup* (I Love You So Much).

The two have spent some of their income in making a collection of pictures. They own several hundred paintings, which they loan to museums. If you ask Hildegarde how she acquired a knowledge of painting, she says loyally and with pride, "It's Anna." Shaking her straw-blond head with its upswept hair-do, she explains, as if still amazed by the many capabilities of her partner, "Anna has an instinct for art."

Hildegarde has never married. Though she has been engaged more than once, things always ended there, for she never found any one for whom she wanted to give it all up, and her particular kind of show business—working most of the night—would have put a strain on married life. Being a faithful Catholic, who always goes to Mass wherever she is, she wanted no marriage, without being quite sure it would last. She has always been in love—with an audience. Perhaps that is a large part of the answer.

Seventeen years after the first attempt at the Café de

Paris, Hildegarde appeared there again. But alas, it was not the same. Early in the War, the building had been hit during one of the German air raids, and kind Mr. Poulson had been killed. He had told her she would return in triumph to his café some day. She had come, remembering his telling her "success is a combination of many things," but he was no longer there to welcome her. He had been right; she understood it now. Though her first experience there was an unhappy one, Hildegarde retains a soft spot in her heart for that particular place, and always looks forward to an engagement at the Café de Paris.

After the war, Hildegarde tried something new for a *chanteuse*. She made a great tour of the United States by car. Headed by her own Cadillac, five other sedans carrying her staff and a ten-piece orchestra, a yellow Mack truck containing musical instruments and four trunks of gowns, comprised the caravan on wheels. Traveling about 17,000 miles, she performed in over thirty cities—this time not in fashionable supper clubs, but in school auditoriums, armories, gymnasiums, and, what pleased her most, the Philadelphia Academy of Music. It thrilled her to be on the stage which has been graced by the greatest of musicians. She enjoyed the experience, finding the people in the little towns hungry for "live laughter and song." Then, too, she met people she had known in her childhood. In Memphis she found her sixth grade schoolteacher. In South Bend she saw a property man she had worked with, in old vaudeville days. In Detroit, the nurse who had taken care of her father. Between Toronto and Detroit, she got into heavy snow, skidding into a ditch three times. Once she tried to shovel her way out, but gave it up and walked

four miles to procure a tow car. But she arrived in Detroit in time to give her performance.

Just before Christmas Eve, Hildegarde returned to New York by train. She was met at Grand Central Station with a band and—roses. Though there are some people who do not care for Hildegarde's particular kind of show, she succeeded in winning her following. There are some people who like straight drama and will never go to musical comedy. There is, happily, something for every taste. And many there are who return again and again to enjoy the sparkle, jokes, and songs of the entertaining lady who calls herself the "chantootsie from Milwaukee."

BURL IVES

✧ *Folk-song Singer* ✧

ONE day in Springtime, an old Civil War soldier drove with horse and buggy along the roads of Jasper County, in southern Illinois. As he jogged past a certain poor tenant farm, he saw a woman and her small son, planting onion sets in the garden. He drew in the reins, and the horse came to a halt. The old soldier watched the two bent-over figures a while, but he was more interested in listening, because the roly-poly boy with yellow hair and red cheeks was singing, and his clear child's voice was sweet and accurate. The family who dwelt there, struggling to make a living where the soil was too dry and poor to raise, as they said, "more'n a nubbin' except in bottom land," were known thereabouts as "the singing Iveses." The four-year-old singer—going on five—was Burl Ives.

When the song came to an end, the old soldier in the buggy clapped his hands in applause and called out to the woman, "Guess we'll have to have *that* on the program at the reunion." Thus it came about that Burl first sang in public at a soldier's picnic that summer of 1913. Standing under the cottonwood trees on a rustic platform made of planks, he sang the ballad of "Barbara Allen," a song he had learned from his grandmother, who knew songs and

ballads by the dozen and sang them, secretly, to her grandson. She had to sing them secretly, because her husband disapproved.

The boy had been promised twenty-five cents for singing his song, but the promise was forgotten and he never got his money. That scene foreshadowed Burl Ives's future career, though no one then guessed it, least of all the singer. Many years of struggle and growth had to pass before, feeling his way along, he discovered the value of the songs he had learned from his grandmother.

The boy's grandfather, Cyrus White, could lift up his voice too, but only for the singing of hymns. He regarded all other singing as sinful. His wife, Kate White, did not care much for hymns. The songs she loved were the old ballads which had been sung in her own family. She had come from a singing family in Brown County, Indiana, where the family had settled after moving from Kentucky. Abraham Lincoln's parents had moved into Indiana about the same time. Brown County has been called a folk-song collector's paradise.

When Cyrus was away working in the fields, his wife would often sit in her rocking chair and sing for hours. Burl considered himself a lucky boy when he was there to hear her. In this way, he learned "Barbara Allen," "Lord Thomas," "The Riddle Song," "The Bailiff's Daughter," and "Fair Elinor" before he could even walk. These were ancient songs whose authors are unknown. Such folk songs have come down to us in precisely this way—from mother to child—for many generations. Her singing of the old ballads was the only secret Grandma White did not share with her husband.

In those days folk songs were not generally known and

certainly not valued, except by specialists. Today, they are taught in the schools. Young Burl Ives thought they were something special that belonged to his grandmother.

The boy's earliest years were not too pleasant. The family was poor. Each year, after a skimpy crop had been harvested from the soil, the seven children and all the family's belongings were loaded on a wagon, and the father moved on to look for another farm. It would turn out to be the same story over again—hard, grubbing toil and small yield. Rich earth lay some distance to the north but the Iveses did not strike that. It seemed to the boy that they never had a real home. Sometimes he was hungry. The little old farmhouses had no heated rooms for winter time, no conveniences of any kind. There was much sickness, including typhoid and diphtheria. They scraped along with the barest of necessities, yet these struggling folk living close to the soil were known as a singing people. Burl started to sing as soon as he could talk. Later he said that singing was something that just "went on in our family."

A few months after the picnic at which he first sang for a public audience, the boy started to go to school. He walked four miles to the little white schoolhouse. He liked school because it gave him a chance to play with other children. On Christmas day he sang "I Am a Jolly Carpenter" before an audience. His father played Santa Claus.

The next year, Mr. Ives gave up trying to make a living by tenant farming on such unrewarding soil. He secured a contract for making cement culverts and bridges for road improvement. The family moved to Hunt City, a town of about one hundred people. Here they were nearer the grandparents, and after this move the family was better off. Annual movings had come to an end. Burl's older brothers

became teamsters, hauling gravel, cement, sand and lumber, and at ten and twelve were doing men's work helping their father.

Unless a young person reads or hears about other people's careers, businesses, and professions, he really has no idea what possibilities there are out in the world. He can usually think of nothing to do except what he sees someone else doing. When Burl was eight or nine, he thought he might be a preacher. Hymns and songs in church excited him, and he concluded that it was religious inspiration. It was not until he had the experience of going to his first dance in high school, when he took a little red-headed girl, and heard the orchestra play "The Wabash Blues," and saw all the boys and girls "a singin' and a dancin' and a laughin'" that he realized it was music which excited him, and not religious inspiration. He then gave up the idea of ever becoming a preacher.

He attended high school in Charleston, Illinois, and went home for the week ends. His first musical instrument was a mail-order banjo, which he got with Larkin Soap coupons. It was an old style five-string banjo. the best instrument, he says, for American folk tunes. An old man in Hunt City, who had come from Kentucky, taught Burl to play. In high school, Burl took part in a drama, playing his banjo and singing between the acts. He grew into a strapping big boy, and when he entered Eastern Illinois State Teachers College, he was hoping to become a football coach.

Though music was his real love, he had no idea of ever earning his living with it. There was no radio yet. Burl had never had a voice lesson. He had no one to advise him, and he had not yet met anyone who knew the value of folk

songs. He simply sang naturally, and loved those songs as his grandmother did. But while in college, he awoke to the fact that his musical tastes differed from those of his acquaintances. A freshman's idols in those days were Gene Autry and young Rudy Vallee. Burl did not like their popular songs; he did not like jazz. Preferring his "Barbara Allen" and the songs of his grandmother, he got the reputation, among college boys and girls, of being a queer fellow with peculiar tastes.

About two months before he was to graduate, Burl Ives did something on impulse that was to change his whole life. He was sitting in English class on a fine, spring day, and the teacher was lecturing on Beowulf. The lecture was uninteresting. Burl, who could hardly keep his attention on the droning voice, resented the teacher's dullness. As his mind wandered, his eyes came to rest on a large wall map of the United States. He began to wonder what his vast country was like—the cities, the deserts, the mountains. What would the ocean look like? What were the people like in all the different places? How wonderful it would be to travel, to meet different people, to see fascinating places, to visit historical scenes, to see the Liberty Bell, to walk in streets where Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and great ones in history had walked! American history had apparently appealed to Burl.

Suddenly, in a kind of daze from daydreaming, the senior stood up in class and started for the door, without quite realizing what he was doing. The instructor, having noticed his inattention, surprised him by saying, "Yes, Mr. Ives, I think you had better go home and sleep," a remark which caused a flash of temper and bad manners. Burl charged

out of the room slamming the door behind him with such vehemence that its glass was shattered.

He went home, packed a few sweaters and slacks in a bag, took his guitar and the few dollars he had, and set off down the road facing east. He was off on his travels.

Walking along the highway, he began to consider what he had done. In two months he would have graduated at the State Teachers College, and here he had walked off and left his duties. His parents would be distressed. Ahead of him, the only definite thing he saw was a long gray road. Birds were gaily singing, telegraph wires were humming, and the young runaway was feeling happy to be facing new, unknown adventures. Not once did Burl think of turning back. Even the grass seemed more green and the newly plowed fields looked more beautiful now that he was on his way.

Invited by a truck driver to ride, he told how he had just walked out of school and was going east to see the ocean. The driver advised him to go back and get an education, or he might end driving trucks himself. Burl asked how much he earned and then informed the astonished truck driver that he made more money than most of the teachers in Burl's college. After spending his first night in a haystack in a field, he thought somewhat longingly of the good breakfast he might be having at the College Inn, but he walked on to the next town and breakfasted in a restaurant.

Later he decided to see what would happen if he started to sing and play in the street. He found a small park, and there he began to sing. An audience gathered quickly and soon people started tossing coins on the ground in front of the singer. When he finished, he picked up \$3.50 and that night he slept in a hotel, feeling happy because his

Grandma's old ballads had bought him a meal and a bed. In this way weeks passed by, as Burl thumbed his way eastward, singing for his meals and shelter.

He visited Gettysburg's battlefield, he saw the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, the Bridge at Concord, and many historical places he had learned about in school. He was on a kind of pilgrimage. He slept in tourist camps, hotels, private homes; sometimes he paid for his lodgings in labor, but mostly in songs. Sometimes he found people who knew folk songs that he had never heard and he learned them on the spot. Months sped by. Invited to remain in one Yankee household, he declined, saying that he must get on with his work. Though he would have been unable to explain just what his work was, he felt very seriously that he wanted to amount to something.

The young man's experiences included those both pleasant and ugly, for he met people who were nice and people who were anything but nice. In one western town, a policeman put him in jail for singing "The Foggy Foggy Dew," because he thought it was not a good song! After twenty-four hours the police released him, by driving him out into the desert and abandoning him.

After two years of wandering, the young man turned homeward with the vague idea of trying to find a job "teaching or something." He visited his family, tried again to finish his college course by enrolling in the Indiana State Teachers College, and got a job singing on a local radio, and another in a drugstore to pay his way. Again, inside of two weeks he became unutterably bored, and began to think the fault lay in himself, rather than in his teachers and the schools he had attended. He enjoyed his radio work, being billed as the "Blond Tenor with his

Guitar," but it was not long before he took to the road again.

He has since written his story in his book *The Wayfar-
ing Stranger*. In olden times, he would have been called a
troubadour, or a singing minstrel.

Burl Ives's wanderings taught him much about people,
about the country, and he was always learning more folk
songs whenever he found them. Being asked, in one town,
to serve as tenor singer for a church quartette, the director
advised him to take voice lessons.

This brought about his first important musical contact.
He was introduced to a woman who taught voice, and
from her he learned much more than singing, for she was
the first cultured person to enter his life. Well-educated,
Madame Clara Lyon had herself studied voice with the
great singer, Schumann-Heink. She was a linguist, had
been born in France, and had traveled widely. It was she
who introduced Burl, now in his twenties, to the songs of
Schubert, Schumann, Franz, and the old Italian masters.
She would sit at the piano playing and singing these songs
to her pupils, giving them what amounted to private re-
citals.

Burl had never known the pleasures of reading, and his
teacher now awakened him to these delights. She gave him
copies of fine books for his very own—the *Autobiography
of Benvenuto Cellini*, *Jean Christophe* and *Beethoven the
Creator* by Romain Rolland. It was she who taught Burl
the importance of making good use of his time, so that in-
stead of loafing in cafés singing over and over again the
same songs, he learned to know some good books and clas-
sical music. In order to pay for lessons, he was guitarist and
singer with a jazz orchestra for a time, but he hated every

minute of beating rhythm on his guitar to what he considered the dullest music ever written.

He saved up enough money to go to New York in the autumn for further study as his teacher advised him to do. She presented him with a farewell present of stories by Anatole France, and he read them on the bus.

After his first night in a hotel in the heart of the big city, Burl awoke with a feeling of excitement, highly stimulated by the challenge the great busy city presents to all young people who go there to work out their futures. He felt braced with a sense of adventure at every street corner. It was a city where anything could happen.

He went uptown to International House, where, after paying a room's rent for a week in advance, he had less than a dime left. In the main hall he mingled happily with young men and women who had come there from all over the world, but when some one said, "Let's go to dinner," he excused himself and disappeared. He knew that this was hardly the place where he could strum his guitar and sing for his supper. He applied for work in the commissary, but before he got it, he went hungry for three days. Then his morale sank, he felt he was no good, and like most provincials in the big city, he was convinced that he was a misfit and out of place.

Working in the cafeteria, Ives was able to earn his way while he studied music, read books, made new friends. He sang his Scotch ballad of "Barbara Allen" to a new Swedish friend, who insisted it was a Swedish song. Burl began to wonder where it had really come from. Not long thereafter, he read in the Diary of Samuel Pepys that Mr. Pepys had spent an evening in 1665 singing with friends, and had much enjoyed the Scotch ballad "Barbara Allen." His own

grandmother had learned of her in Kentucky! He became more and more convinced that the old songs he had learned at his grandmother's knee were songs of worth, and that everyone should know them. He did not then know that there were musical historians who had collected and recorded folk songs in books while Burl was growing up; that, even then, some folk songs were being taught in the more up-to-date private schools.

Ives began to study voice with the New York teacher whom his own teacher had recommended. By the end of the year his voice had greatly improved. He studied harmony, music dictation, sight reading, and theory at New York University. He met more people with musical interests, and became one of a group who sang madrigals. For two years they explored the songs of early Italian, French, and English masters. While holding a position at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, experience in the singing of plain song gave him two years of excellent training. In this way he became familiar with the great oratorios, masses and cantatas. He also learned to know a different New York, by frequenting its concerts, theatres, museums and lectures. When he ran out of money for lessons, his teacher told him to come anyway, for she believed he was really going to sing. The day she told him this, he walked on air.

During many hard times, he kept on plugging because he felt within himself a "singing instinct." One source of unhappiness was that most of his friends who were music students lifted their eyebrows at his old ballads. Young conservatory students had small sympathy and feeling for the simple old songs. Ives said later that in 1933 he could

not "give a ballad away," but eleven years afterward people were to come in swarms to hear him.

One evening after attending a theatre, Ives met one of the actors, William Geer, who became his friend. Through him other opportunities came Ives's way. He met other actors and performers at Geer's apartment, and learned that their work was twofold. In addition to professional work as entertainers, they gave their services, without monetary reward, in benefit entertainments to raise money for hospitals, orphanages, and many good causes. Not long after meeting Geer, Burl Ives, too, was singing his folk songs at benefit concerts. This was in the latter part of the 1930's, when the German Nazis were threatening the western world with war.

After one occasion when Burl had sung gratis, he read a notice about it in the next day's paper. He was highly gratified and touched to see that the writer referred to him as "an artist, a real singer of the people. Every song was a poem." This was the kind of publicity he needed. He needed it more than money. But the phrase, "singer of the people" caused a wave of homesickness that carried his thoughts back to his grandmother, his childhood, his family's ways. His friend Geer told him to go home, visit his people, and get the nostalgia out of his system. Then he must return to New York, for he had a talent to give the people.

It was like the prodigal's return. His parents, looking older, were happy to see him again. His sisters and brothers, scattered to homes of their own, gathered around to be on hand to welcome the wayfarer. The things he best liked to eat were set on the dinner table. After the meal, they sang songs and asked Burl to sing. He sang on into the

night. His mother, and even his father, sang folk songs too. His father took him aside to say that, though his wandering life had caused his parents much distress, he now believed in his son and wanted him to "stick to it." As Burl was still wearing old clothes and shoes, he was the more touched by his father's faith in him, for he was still unable to explain his aims in life, and in his work.

Upon returning to New York, he started on a round of perpetual calling at the offices of producers, hoping to see and impress some casting director and secure a job on the stage. Apparently he had never read or heard of this discouraging procedure, which thousands of young people, hopeful of becoming actors, have undergone. He later wrote that "the miles the many young hopefuls of the theatre walk each week, the hours they stand waiting would stagger the average citizen." They staggered him. But after much weary tramping, he succeeded in getting a small part in a play for three weeks. After that he trudged from office to office again. By good luck—something that happens in the theatre and anywhere, to those who keep on striving—Burl succeeded in performing in a try-out before a group of important Broadway producers. They enjoyed him so much that they wrote a part for him in a new musical comedy called *The Boys from Syracuse*, based on Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. It ran for thirty-five weeks.

Now that young Mr. Ives knew Broadway producers, he asked one of them how to study acting. Upon advice, the folk-song specialist then studied acting with Benno Schneider, while appearing in the Broadway show.

One success leads to another. Though Ives had tried for a job on radio to no avail, he now pleased the program di-

rector in his first audition for NBC, and received a contract for a weekly program. He used for his title, *The Wayfarin' Stranger*.

The wayfaring stranger was thirty years old before he realized that his large repertoire of over two hundred songs had professional entertainment value. When Carl Sandburg, the specialist in American folk music, first heard Ives sing his songs, he called him "the greatest ballad singer in the world." After spending years in wandering, collecting songs in addition to those he had learned at home, Ives had a vast repertoire. He knew cowboy songs, work songs, railroad songs, mountain songs, as well as the old ballads which had originated in the British Isles. Nowadays, even school-children know the "Frog and the Mouse," and "The Blue Tail Fly."

Success now followed upon success. Burl Ives was the star performer in *Sing Out, Sweet Land*. When the show played in Chicago, his whole family came to his dressing room in the theatre to see him before the performance. It was a great night when the family saw the name of their boy, who had run away from home, in shining lights in front of the theatre.

Mr. Ives then had experience acting in summer stock. He played character parts in five Hollywood movies. He made many records, which became a valuable contribution to American folklore. He sang in night clubs and gave recitals in music halls. He had achieved big time.

In contrast to his early living in a dry inland region, Ives gave himself the pleasure of living on a houseboat for some years. He kept it moored in Whitestone, Queens, near New York City. He gave houseboat parties, at which he would sing all night for his friends. In 1942 he entered the

Army, but he did not have much soldier life as Ezra Stone, the actor, took him to Camp Upton to appear in the show *This Is the Army*. With this show he toured the country. After a concert tour around the world, the singer will go on looking for more folk songs. He has discovered that "wherever you find people, you find ballads."

Though Mr. Ives appears on television and radio, he will not have them in his apartment. He prefers to read. He is catching up on reading the classic Greeks and the great English writers—literature that he did not learn to love till he had left college. In addition to literature, he loves the sea and travel, and takes vast pleasure in his large beautiful, motor-equipped sailboat.

The folk-song singer was christened Burl Icle Ivanhoe, for reasons he does not know. He does know he was named Burl for one of his father's friends. One can easily understand why he dropped his two middle names. As for his first name, also uncommon, he says the dictionary defines a burl as a knot in a stick of wood, and that is good enough for him.

PATRICE MUNSEL

✧ *Opera Singer* ✧

AMONG all the various kinds of entertainment, the most costly, elegant, and formal is grand opera. A perfect performance is very expensive to produce. Besides the singers, there must be a full orchestra, a conductor, sometimes dancers or a ballet company, expensive scenery and props, as well as stage director and many others working behind the scenes. There are few "grand" opera houses.

Because of the cost, comparatively few people among our country's millions ever have the chance to hear and see a polished operatic performance by a highly trained company. One must be in a great metropolis to find grand opera in its most splendid setting. Even there, one can go to opera only in the right season.

Though grand opera is an uncommon experience in the lives of most Americans, this was not true in most European countries before the World Wars, where many governments subsidized national opera houses. In pre-war Europe, opera was almost as inexpensive as movies in America.

In Italy, the original home of opera, every city has its opera house, and everyone knows and can sing and hum operatic melodies. In our newer country, where people were engaged in settling a new land for two hundred years,

opera, when it came, was imported from Europe. With the growth of private fortunes, our Metropolitan Opera House in New York was able to offer the highest fees in the world to attract and obtain the greatest singers. The "Met" then became opera heaven to European opera stars.

Opera is not the purest or most rarified form of musical art, however. It is a hybrid form, combining the musical and dramatic arts. Yet all of the greatest composers in the last two centuries, with the exception of Brahms, were beguiled by the form and contributed to its beautiful music.

Americans have now become familiar with operatic music, through the radio and victrola records, but hearing opera is only part of it. To understand it, one should also see the acting, the costumes, the color, the setting.

For generations, Americans naturally thought that the best musicians and singers were those from Europe where there was a musical tradition. Only within the last generation or two have American singers and musicians found their way to the top and, for the most part, they had to have their training and their first experience in Europe. Musical reputations had to be made there first, before there was any chance of a reputation here. For opera singers, the various European opera houses were steppingstones to the great Met in New York. Even the incomparable La Scala, in Milan, was a kind of last jumping-off place, whence, if an opera singer received acclaim there, he or she could hope for a contract at the Metropolitan.

All this makes it the more remarkable that one American girl arrived at the top at an early age, with no European background, and with comparative ease. Patrice Mun-

sel seemed to spring up the ladder with a final leap to the stage of the Met.

Patrice was born in Spokane, Washington, in 1925, to parents who were not musicians by profession. Her mother could play the piano well. Her father is a dentist. When she was six, Patrice began to take lessons in whistling which her teacher regarded as an art—something more than a parlor trick. When the child was twelve, she began to work on “artistic whistling.” The next year, according to her teacher, she could whistle bird imitations beautifully. Taking part in a pupils’ whistling recital, the little girl discovered that she simply loved being on a stage in front of all those people. She had a wonderful time. It was the beginning of her falling in love with an audience.

Now there is, in fact, a close similarity between the trills and chirps of the finest singing birds and the trills, turns, and repeated staccato notes of cadenzas written by the earlier Italian masters for their *coloratura* sopranos. *Coloratura* means colored singing, that is, singing with a display of ornamentation in runs, rapid passages, divisions and intervals, in which each syllable has at least two, or many more, notes to it. It was the old *figurato*, or figured style. Naturally, such a style is possible only to voices or instruments of higher registers. A bass voice trying to execute a rapid passage would only sound like a rumble, and the same confusion of tones would occur were a deep-toned instrument to try to play an ornate and rapid passage. But for the light, high soprano with an elastic voice, the ornamental style is a “natural.” Moreover, the old Italian composers, who wrote music for *coloratura* sopranos, lived in a land of larks. It is not, therefore, really surprising that, after hearing a cadenza sung by a fine *coloratura*, some one is sure to say, “She sings like a bird.”

Whether the whistling helped Patrice in her later voice studies, her childhood years of thinking in light, high tones, flexible trills, and cascades of notes, even though she produced them by puckered lips instead of vocal cords, certainly conditioned her for the tones of the soprano. She herself thinks it did help. "Actually," she says, "it developed my diaphragm, and singers need powerful lungs and chest muscles."

The whistling teacher came to realize that the girl had an extraordinary voice, and talked about it with her mother. At twelve, therefore, Patrice began to study voice, though she was not very serious about it until she was fourteen.

She went through the grades in Spokane's schools, and while at Lewis and Clark High School something important happened. A touring opera company came to Spokane and gave a performance of *Madame Butterfly* in the high school. Patrice went with her friend Mary Jo Williams. She was deeply impressed. What impressed her most was the idea of being up there on the stage singing to a vast audience. That, she thought, would be really thrilling.

After it was over, Patrice vowed to her friend, as they left the auditorium, that some day she herself was going to sing at the Metropolitan in New York. Mary Jo naturally expressed her doubts, and went to the extent of betting fifteen cents it wouldn't happen. Patrice took the bet in all seriousness, and the wager was formally recorded on the back of a paper of matches. Incredible as it seems, only six years later, at seventeen, Patrice collected the bet. Now she treasures the fifteen cents, while Mary Jo treasures the match cover.

Patrice was a fun-loving child, delighting in playing ball, riding bicycle "no hands," swimming, sailing, and horse-

back riding. Her happy childhood was the foundation for her cheerful, gay personality. In high school she showed rather unusual intelligence and resourcefulness when, at fourteen and fifteen, she acted in the Junior Little Theatre. She stopped school after the first half of her sophomore year to work hard on voice lessons. By that time, she received further encouragement as to the possibilities of her voice, and she became more and more determined upon a singing career. Claudia Muzio, one of the opera stars, was her ideal. As she was not interested in reading about the careers of great singers of the past, she probably did not know about the arduous and difficult climbs that most of them had. She studied piano, but piano practice was too demanding for her. She did not like it. But she did enjoy dancing lessons for six years.

Since she was an only child, her future was naturally of paramount importance to her parents. They decided that her mother would take her to New York, where Patrice, not quite sixteen, would undertake full-time study for a singer's career. Patrice set to work with the determination that is one of her pronounced characteristics. But after all that had been done for her, everything did not go smoothly.

A voice student should have a desert or a mountain handy, in order to go there and practice vocalizing. The exercises a singer must do are not very pleasing to the neighbors. In a city like New York, there are studio apartments with soundproof walls, where these things can be done, but the newcomers from the West had not settled in one of them. Pressed by his other tenants, their landlord canceled their lease. Mother and daughter moved to an apartment hotel.

This was merely an annoyance, but a real disappointment was looming up, for Patrice soon began to realize that her voice was not improving. At the end of four months, completely discouraged, she gave up her study. It was now midsummer, and excessive heat added to her discomfort. With thoughts of home in cool Spokane, mother and daughter decided to give it up for the time being, at least, packed their trunks, and ordered reservations.

Just a few hours before they were to leave New York, Patrice received a telegram from her father. He had been talking with a woman who told him about an excellent voice teacher in New York. His name was William Herman. Her father thought it would be wise to see what he had to say before they left. Patrice and her mother postponed their departure, and the girl had an audition with Mr. Herman.

He examined her thoroughly. He found her voice clear, agile, with strong top notes. It was a little heavier than usual for a coloratura, but she could no doubt become one. She had a good strong physique, which is necessary for the opera singer's arduous, demanding schedule. She was energetic, quick, intelligent. He said she already had much with which to start, but he told her frankly that it would require constant hard work. Mr. Herman then outlined a program of work which she would have to follow through, and even then he would not promise results. In the end, she might succeed in singing at the Metropolitan Opera House, and she might not. More he could not undertake to say.

Patrice took lessons with him every day for ten days. Then mother and daughter returned to Spokane. Patrice wanted time to think over this momentous decision.

After three months she made up her mind. She appreciated Mr. Herman's frankness. His warning of the hard work that lay ahead, his unwillingness to make promises, did not frighten her off; on the contrary, it gave her a feeling of confidence in his judgment. Already she was distrustful of flattery. Choosing such a difficult regime of study might be like choosing the leaden casket rather than the gold, but she did want a career of singing. Again, Patrice and her mother made the journey to New York, and she entered upon the Herman program.

This time the work was rigorous. There was a voice lesson every morning with Mr. Herman. Every afternoon for two hours she was coached in operatic rôles. There were hour lessons daily in French and in Italian. In the late afternoon, she had her second daily lesson with Mr. Herman. He supplied her with a reading list in history and literature. She took fencing lessons for bodily poise. She studied harmony, theory of music, dramatics for opera. She worked on these things for two years.

The possession of a beautiful voice is a physical accident. No singer, having a voice to start with, needs to practice long hours, as players of instruments must, in order to perfect technique. Indeed, it would be a physical impossibility. The throat and the voice would be worn out with the daily practice of several hours that a violinist or pianist habitually performs. In the old days of Italian coloratura training, students worked for seven years before they were regarded as artists. Nowadays, with the changing times, everyone looks for a quick way to get results.

Radio had by this time entered the operatic picture, and the Metropolitan Auditions of the Air were taking place every Sunday afternoon. Anyone with a radio could listen to the try-outs of the aspirants. Patrice wanted to try, and

arrangements were made. She would sing the Mad Scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Imagine everyone's surprise to see a girl coming before the auditioning board dressed in a sweater and skirt, saddle shoes and ankle socks. Being very nearsighted, she was wearing heavy glasses, and she wore them while she sang.

Wilfred Pelletier, a Metropolitan opera conductor, was watching her from the control booth. After she finished, he asked her to take off her glasses so he could see her better. She then sang two more arias, and the wonder happened. She was accepted for an appearance at the Metropolitan Opera House—this girl who had never sung in Europe, never had any European training, never appeared in any opera house. She was seventeen when she received a Metropolitan contract and \$1,000 for further study.

Only once in the history of the Metropolitan had a singer appeared there at a younger age. Marion Talley was five months younger than Patrice, when she sang the part of "Gilda" for her Metropolitan debut.

On December 4, 1943, Patrice Munsel won her bet with Mary Jo, singing Philene in *Mignon*, with Risë Stevens, another American-born singer, as *Mignon*. Even better, she experienced the greatest thrill of all—she pleased her audience so much she stopped the show, the applause being so loud and so prolonged. For seven minutes people clapped and shouted before the performance could proceed. Patrice had reached her goal.

Though the critics were not all pleased, the concert manager, S. Hurok, was favorably impressed. There were not many coloraturas, and the popular coloratura of the Metropolitan, Lily Pons, was on a wartime concert tour. Mr. Hurok could easily procure concert and radio contracts

for such a singer. He called on Patrice and liked her gay and lively personality. She has expressive brown eyes, black hair, a flashing dimpled smile, a gracious manner. He invited her to sign a contract for concerts.

Patrice spent the next summer on a concert tour. The next season she sang at the Metropolitan, appeared also in concerts and radio. The following two seasons, she sang new rôles at the Metropolitan Opera House. But the critics were being distinctly chilly, and she was beginning to feel discouraged again. What was the matter? They did not like her Juliette. Her Lakmé, a classic rôle for coloraturas, did not please them. Though she was called "the baby of the Met" and had been earning vast sums from radio and concert appearances, she began to wonder, at twenty-one, if she was really slipping.

Then something happened, and again, just in time. Miss Munsel says that all her life it has been that way. Just when she feels discouraged in the extreme, something happens to change the picture bright again. This time the "happening" was when she was persuaded to sing light opera, appearing in Victor Herbert's *Naughty Marietta* in Pittsburgh in the summer of 1949. In this she experienced a new and marvelous sensation. She got her first laugh. It was wonderful. A week of producing laughs in her audiences boosted her morale sky-high, and confidence returned.

In the autumn, she tried a rôle that Edward Johnson, then impresario of the Metropolitan, had always felt that she could do. It was Zerlina, in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Pretty, gay, disarming, her Zerlina caused the critics to reconsider, and audiences went wild with delight. The next summer, she was off to the West Coast, to study comedy

timing and spoken lines. The next season at the Metropolitan, she again stopped the show, singing Adèle in *Die Fledermaus*. This is operetta, not grand opera, and presenting it was a new departure for the august Metropolitan. The new impresario, Rudolf Bing, felt that Munsel would make a superb soubrette, however, and was willing to produce works that would provide such rôles. She was not only singing at the Met but her particular qualities were causing a deviation in the standard repertoire of the Metropolitan's offerings! It was big time, indeed.

The next innovation was the production of the Mozart *Così fan Tutte*, in English, produced solely to give Patrice a chance to sing Despina. It was a brilliant success.

After she became an opera star, Miss Munsel continued her study of musical history, and coaching for other rôles she wants to sing. She has many hobbies—painting, sketching, sewing. She still likes to ski, swim, sail, and ride horseback. She is not the old-style "precious" prima donna. She is an American girl who has made a great success, after having fallen in love at first, as a child, with the feeling of having an audience before her. She does not play piano well enough to play scores and has no desire to; she would rather know how to play the guitar.

Miss Munsel memorizes very easily, and when she learns an operatic rôle, she learns the rôles of the other singers, too. Her advice to all who would be on the stage is to get experience in stock. For a time, she became definitely bored by being asked if she thought marriage would interfere with her career. But that question will hardly disturb her again. She was married in her mid-twenties, and knows now what it means to cancel Metropolitan engagements so she can take time out to have a baby.

EUGENE LIST

✧ *Pianist* ✧

FROM Odessa, in far-off southern Russia, a land much farther away before this age of airplanes and fast ships, the grandfather of the American pianist, Eugene List, came to try to make a living in a new land, free from Czar and tyrants. Barely able to scrape up enough money for his own single fare, he had to leave his family behind. Bit by bit in this land of better wages, he saved enough money for one more fare and sent for his son, who was to become the pianist's father. Then there was another period of hard saving, before he could send for another. Eugene List's father remembered how their Russian neighbors talked when his father left for America alone. They were not too kindly.

"Oh, that's the last you'll ever see of your husband," these busybodies told the wife he had left behind. "He'll never be sending for you and your big family to go over there."

It took a long time to bring the whole family over, but in the end they all reached America. Eugene's father, then a boy of only thirteen, had to cross Europe and the Atlantic Ocean all alone, arriving in the United States unable

to speak a single word of English. When the family were together again, they settled in Philadelphia.

Before the Russian revolutions of 1917, another family from the same vicinity in southern Russia also came and settled in Philadelphia. The daughter of that family met and married the boy who had come alone. These were the parents of Eugene, who was born in the shadow of Independence Hall.

When Eugene was a year old, the Lists moved to Los Angeles, where the boy spent his childhood, and where his father, a teacher of languages, still lives. His mother is now a pharmacist whose hobby is amateur dramatics, but when Eugene was a little boy, she gave piano lessons. As a child, Eugene was accustomed from the beginning to seeing other children come to his house for their lessons. Apparently attracted by this, he wanted piano lessons too, and at the age of five, began to study with his mother.

A musical inclination ran in the family. An uncle and a sister were musical. His father liked music and appreciated it, but Eugene's talent came from his mother.

She taught him for a year and then placed him under another teacher for a short time. Then he began to study with Julius V. Seyler, remaining with him until he was twelve. This teacher he remembers most fondly. It was Seyler who prepared him for bigger things by introducing the boy to the great classics.

Eugene was seven when he began playing in children's concerts. When he was ten, he was playing a Mozart concerto and other advanced works. He was only ten when he played the third Beethoven Concerto with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Artur Rodzinski.

Before long, his parents decided that, since Eugene was plainly going to be a pianist, he should be taken East, where he could study and live in the center of America's musical life. It was not an easy thing to do. As with the generation before, there was not enough money for the whole family of four to buy tickets for such a long trip. Somehow the List family had to raise funds.

With the help of the teacher, Mr. Seyler, they planned a farewell recital to be given by the twelve-year-old boy. Mrs. List asked everyone she could to buy tickets. Their endeavors were rewarded when Eugene's recital brought them between four and five hundred dollars, which was a large sum for a youngster's recital.

Although this was enough to make the start, it was not enough for the whole family, and they would have to be separated for a time. But the generation before them had done it, and so could they. Mother and son went across the country by bus. Father and daughter remained in California and came later. Eugene and his mother went first to Philadelphia and stayed with Eugene's aunt.

Money, however, remained the question. Eugene was now where he could study and hear more music, but where was the money for lessons? One Saturday, Mrs. List decided to take her son to New York the following Monday to see if, somehow, Eugene could pick up a scholarship. In Sunday's paper, however, they saw a notice which changed their plans.

They read that a contest for piano students was to be held in Philadelphia. The winner would receive a scholarship for study with Olga Samaroff, one of the best women pianists of the time, then the wife of Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. She

was an American, originally from Texas, whose real name was Lucy Hickenlooper. What was the use of going to New York, thought Mrs. List, with an opportunity like this right at hand? They put off their trip to New York until Eugene could be entered in the local contest.

That was not easy, either. On Monday, Eugene's mother was told that it was impossible for her son to enter the contest. The list had been filled two weeks before. No newcomers could be considered now. But the more impossible it seemed, the more Mrs. List pleaded. She explained how they had come all the way from California, by tedious travel, just to seek an opportunity for the boy to study music. They had sacrificed much. To be disappointed in the first opportunity was just more than she could accept. Finally, the mother's plea won, the authorities gave in, and Eugene was numbered among those who were to play for the judges.

It was the usual examination. He had to be prepared to play a Bach Prelude and Fugue, a Beethoven Sonata, something from the romantic school, probably Chopin or Schumann, and a show piece for dexterity and technique.

Without waiting to hear the judges' decision, mother and son left for New York immediately after the contest to investigate opportunities there. But they did not have to seek further. A telegram came. Eugene had won.

In this way, young List became a pupil of Samaroff with whom he studied for three years at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Later, when she taught at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. List continued to study with her there.

In Los Angeles, Eugene had attended the public schools, and in Philadelphia, he went to high school. During his

last year, he won another contest which proved to be the start of his professional career. Leopold Stokowski had instituted a series of youth concerts with the Philadelphia Orchestra, presenting programs with special appeal to young listeners. Since a young soloist would have more appeal to a young audience than an older artist, a contest was held to find the young soloist.

Eugene, being a promising pupil of the conductor's wife, was naturally a contestant. He was scheduled to play the Schumann Piano Concerto. Again, something occurred to change his plans. About four weeks before the contest, Mr. Stokowski sent Eugene a message, asking him to come back stage to see him. Stokowski had just received, from Russia, a copy of the new piano concerto by Shostakovich. Would Eugene be willing to try to learn this new concerto and play it in the contest? What was the boy to say? To learn a concerto well enough to play in four weeks was difficult enough, but to learn a very modern one was more difficult still. Nevertheless he went to work on the new concerto, undoubtedly helped and encouraged by his teacher.

The date for the contest was delayed two weeks, which might have given Eugene extra time. Instead, he came down with influenza and was ill for the whole extra fortnight. He looks back at that period as a race with time and influenza. He won the race however, and his ability to master the new concerto led to great success, both for himself and for the première performance of the composition.

So successful was List's playing that the concert manager, Arthur Judson, immediately offered him a five-year contract. On the strength of this performance, List was also asked to play the same work at its New York première

with the New York Philharmonic. With these successes behind him, Eugene List was launched upon his career.

He moved to New York City, continuing his study with Samaroff for four more years in the latter 1930's, while he began a life of concertizing. He toured not only this country, but also Canada and Mexico. But when the historically significant December of 1941 came, List's playing had still all been on this side of the Atlantic. He had not yet embarked upon a European concert tour. After all, he was only twenty-one.

He had traveled in Europe, however, because Madame Samaroff, feeling that the broadening experience acquired in studious travel was necessary to the growth of a young artist, took him across on more than one occasion. She introduced him to the beauties of Salzburg, of Italy, and the art and architecture of western Europe.

On the fateful Sunday evening, December 7th, 1941, Eugene List was scheduled to broadcast on the Ford Sunday evening hour. On that morning, therefore, List was in Detroit, rehearsing with the orchestra for the evening performance. After the rehearsal, Eugene Ormandy, the conductor, said, "Come, let us have lunch together," and the two went off to a favorite restaurant.

They turned on the radio in the restaurant in order to hear Artur Rubenstein, the pianist, who was playing with the New York Philharmonic. That was the Sunday afternoon when all broadcasts in the United States were interrupted by the announcement of the most profoundly shocking news America has ever heard. All who listened that day will never forget, for they heard of the treacherous Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor

To all loyal citizens, it was a call to arms. Americans had

been watching with dismay, for several years, the growing power of the Nazis in Europe, and their ruthless conquests of neighboring countries. Like most Americans, Eugene List never thought that his own country would be involved in serious international troubles. Instantly, after his first feeling of shock, the pianist now made a resolution: He would enlist. He would offer his services to his country. He could not do anything else.

Acting at once, the pianist was soon a recruit, then a private first class. At first he was in the army's transportation corps, but it was not long until he was assigned to special morale service. The Army was going to use his talent for entertaining the soldiers.

At the induction center, a soldier asked him what he had been doing as a civilian.

"I played the piano," List answered.

"Whose band?" the G.I. wanted to know.

"I played alone."

"Shucks," the G.I. commented, "there's no money in that."

For some time List was stationed at the New York Port of Embarkation in Brooklyn. He considered this fortunate, since he had several opportunities to play, though none to practice. Playing for war bond drives, camps, hospitals, he turned all the money over to the Army Emergency Relief Fund. When, within the first few months, he was promoted to corporal, he received his promotion in a very unusual setting for new corporals—on the stage of the Lewisohn Stadium in New York. List had just played with the New York Philharmonic. His commanding officer then presented him with a corporal's warrant "not because of

your outstanding ability as a pianist, but because you're a good soldier."

All soldiers of Corporal's List's calibre had other ideas about soldiering, however, than staying in the home land. After he told his colonel, Harold G. Hoffmann, a former governor of New Jersey, that he wanted to go overseas, arrangements were made for the pianist—now a staff sergeant—to go across,

Stationed in Paris, List was given what he considered a most remarkable assignment. He had not realized that the Army personnel service endeavored to use the natural talents and abilities of its men, trying, so far as they could, to give men the kind of work they knew best. He was therefore surprised and gratified to discover that he was to go on being a pianist—a pianist in uniform. Given a jeep and ordered to play for the troops, he was sent all over western Europe, first to England and France, then to Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, and the Low Countries. He played not only in concert halls, but in buildings of almost any kind and even with his piano standing in a truck. During his period of European duty, he played for thousands and thousands of soldiers. Nowadays, when Mr. List appears in concerts throughout the country, it makes him happy to have many ex-soldiers come up to him and tell him they heard him play when they were soldiering far away from home. The pianist looks back upon his Army career as having been filled with rich experiences.

During this time, List made his European début before civilian audiences. His playing in Paris with the National Orchestra of the French Radio broadcasts led to further engagements in Paris and in London. By 1945, Sergeant List belonged to a group of the best G.I. entertainers in

Europe. These army musicians included performers of all types of music—serious and jazz. There were also actors, singers, and variety artists. Entertainment was provided to please all tastes. Eugene List and his violinist friend, Stuart Canin, were sent along as the “long hair” members of the contingent. Upon one occasion, the two, appearing jointly, substituted for the world-renowned violinist, Jascha Heifetz, in Rheims. In July, they were in Munich, when a telephone call from the Paris Headquarters demanded their instant return. They were told to catch the next plane as an important assignment awaited them. No one said what it was. In Paris, they were told to go to Potsdam. They still had no idea why they were going. It was orders.

Arrived at their destination, they could see at once that something extremely important was going on. They were assigned tents outside the town, and given special passes, with the warning that they might have to show them at any instant. American Military Police and secret service men were everywhere. Russian guards were stationed at close intervals all along the streets. The security, Mr. List recalls, “was terrific.” Then came a never-to-be-forgotten moment when the pianist discovered what it was all about. A Special Service Officer in the area approached Sergeant List and Corporal Canin and told them to get ready. They were to “play for the President tonight.”

What a thrill! But it was disconcerting in more ways than one. Having been living in barrack bags and tents, they felt suddenly very mussed, untidy, and literally long-haired. Their uniforms would have to be pressed at once, and they needed haircuts. At the Post Exchange barber shop, they found a line of soldiers three blocks long—all waiting for haircuts! It was impossible to wait. Since it

was almost closing time, the long line of heads already in waiting could not be taken care of that day.

The Sergeant asked the army barber soldier if he would attend to them right away. It was very important. The barber said certainly not; he could not take them before all those others who had been standing for hours. They'd have to wait their turn, the same as everybody else. List insisted that it really was urgent, they simply had to have haircuts before evening. But the barber had heard that story before. He insisted that each man must wait his own fair turn. Almost desperate, List finally disclosed his good reason for asking priority.

"Look," he pleaded, "we're playing for the President tonight."

Alas, he might have known! The barber simply answered, "Yes, now I've heard everything."

Seeing it was hopeless, the two artists in khaki explained their predicament to an officer, who told them to go to the barber for the Vips. Repairing in haste to a barber who cut the hair of high brass only, they felt woefully embarrassed and out of place. Feeling—with colonels, majors, and generals all around them—that they had to explain their own humble presence, they kept asking each other at intervals, in loud tones, "What are you playing for the President tonight?"

Long after mess call in their own area, where the dinner hour was very early, the Sergeant and the Corporal were driven to a formal dinner, at President Truman's temporary White House in the little village of Babelsberg, outside of Potsdam. This was a beautiful large residence on the shore of a lake. Presently, the two young soldiers began to see fine limousines drawing up to the entrance. Secret

service and security became more and more pronounced. The very atmosphere seemed to become more rarified, and at last came the moment when the young soldier musicians realized who it was—besides the President—they were about to entertain. They may not then have known that the occasion would go down in history as the Potsdam Conference of the Big Three, but they knew that, besides President Truman, their host for the evening, the guests were the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, and Josef Stalin, the Ruler of Russia.

The banqueting hall opened on a large verandah and looked out upon the lake. The piano was placed on the verandah. For two and a half hours—all during the dinner—List and Canin made music for the three most important men in the world at that moment.

Sometime before, while the violinist had been in hospital, his music had been mislaid. When he tried to buy some in Paris, he found that the Germans during their occupation of the city, had almost completely robbed the French capital. Stores had no music at all. Since the violinist therefore had not enough music to play for a whole evening, List filled in with several groups of piano solos.

Stalin, speaking Russian only, was equipped with two interpreters: one man interpreting what he said, and the other interpreting remarks addressed to him. Thus the flow of talk moved past him in one direction only. The evening was purely social. Subjects of war, peace, and politics were barred. At one point, Stalin stood up and, to the amazement of Sergeant List, said,

“I want to drink a toast to the pianist.”

This being interpreted, President Truman beckoned to List to come forward. As he left the piano and was cross-

ing the floor toward the banquet table, a glass of vodka was slipped into his hand. He and the dictator of Soviet Russia met in the center of the floor and clicked glasses. In his slightly dazed mind, the young Sergeant was wondering what in the world he could say to Marshal Stalin. But he bethought himself to say that his own forbears had been Russians, that his grandparents had migrated to the United States from southern Russia. Then he told Mr. Stalin that he was the pianist who had had the opportunity of playing the American première of the recent Shostakovich Concerto. Thus the encounter passed off gracefully and the Sergeant returned to the piano to favor his toastmaker with some of the Shostakovich preludes.

Presently President Truman left his guests and approached the piano. He complimented List on his playing of the Chopin *Fantasia-Impromptu*. In subsequent conversations, List learned that the music of Chopin was the President's favorite.

Mr. Churchill then came over. He asked the Sergeant to play, as a gracious gesture to their host, the "Missouri Waltz." List had not paid any attention to the "Missouri Waltz," but fortunately he knew how it went. He sat down and improvised it.

Later, the President himself sat down at the piano and played a part of Paderewski's *Minuet in G*. He played well, and List thought his playing showed that he loved music and loved the piano. The President told List that, when he was a boy, he had wanted to become a pianist. He loved it so that he used to get up at five in the morning, to practice two hours before going to school. Sergeant List was impressed. He says, "I never did that." The President's attitude was warm and friendly, and the soldier pianist was

deeply gratified when, late in the evening, a secret service man came up to him while he was playing, and said, "The boss just wants me to tell you you're doing fine."

An example of the intense watchfulness that prevailed during the occasion was shown when the violinist reached behind the piano for his violin case, which he had placed there to be in readiness. Before he could get it open and take out his instrument, the President's secret service men and the Russian Colonel commanding the guards, rushed up to make sure that the case really did contain a violin. It was not a moment for taking chances! Mr. List now recalls that "the whole thing had such an unreal quality, it still seems like a dream."

During the two and a half weeks that he lived there in a tent, List naturally wanted to practice. Learning that the house where General Marshall was staying contained a fine Steinway piano, List made a secret pact with the General's Sergeant. When the General was going to be away for a day, the signal was given to List that the coast was clear, whereupon he would go to the temporary billet of the American Chief of Staff to practice.

In that fortnight, he played five times for the President. Each time, when the President spoke to him, he would mention the Chopin A-flat Waltz as being a special favorite. There are three Chopin waltzes in the Key of A-flat. The one the President liked was the one which begins with a long trill, Opus 42. It just so happened that List had never learned that waltz, and he sought help in trying to procure a copy of it. A copy was found in Paris and was sent to him, but he received it on the last day. That evening he was to play there for the last time, and he spent the day practicing the waltz.

During the farewell evening, a moment came when the Sergeant addressed his host, "Mr. President, I have a surprise for you." Explaining that the surprise music had just arrived that day, he would have to use his notes and needed some one to turn his pages. A young captain jumped up, offering to turn pages but added that, since he could not read music, the pianist would have to tell him when to turn. He was already halfway across the floor, when the President himself came forward and said he would turn the pages.

List's duties during the Conference included playing not only for the President, but also for General Marshall and for the late General "Hap" Arnold. One evening when General Marshall expected to entertain the Russian Chief of Staff, he sent his aide to ask List to come and play for them. When List arrived, the aide looked surprised, and asked the pianist if he had not received a message that had been sent to him.

"What message?"

"The General had to cancel the party," the aide explained, "and sent you a message."

But List had not received it. The aide expressed regret and inquired, solicitously, what he would do then for the evening. List observed that, as it was still early, he would go to the movies.

The aide said he would summon the General's car which would take the Sergeant wherever he wanted to go. List demurred. The movies were only three blocks away—he'd walk. Moreover, a sergeant was not in the habit of riding around in fine cars. But the aide insisted and the car came around. There was nothing to do but accept graciously and climb in.

General Marshall's private car looked like—a general's private car! One could see at a glance that it was meant to carry exalted rank. But, even more impressive, it bore five stars on its front, General Marshall's own insignia. When the General was not in the car, the insignia was supposed to be covered over. But this time, someone forgot. The stars were in plain view, while within the car sat an embarrassed sergeant, looking out at passing officers bringing up their hands to smart salute. When the car door was ceremoniously opened for him in front of the movie house, he got out to see the puzzled and astonished expressions on the faces of people who were expecting to see the General.

In 1946, List returned to civilian life and at once resumed the concert artist's busy round of engagements and concert tours. He married a violinist, Carroll Glenn, a South Carolina girl whom he had known before the war when she, too, was studying at the Juilliard School of Music. They performed together at the White House. Two composers have written concertos for violin and piano, with orchestra, expressly for the Lists.

Many young people wonder if successful marriages are possible, when both husband and wife pursue artistic careers. The Lists prove that it can be done. Carroll Glenn fulfills her concert schedule, and Eugene List does likewise. At home, a blonde baby girl awaits them and helps to make each frequent reunion a happy celebration.

Mr. List appeared in a movie called *Bachelors' Daughters*, not only as a pianist but also as an actor in a small character part. Having spent his childhood in Los Angeles, Hollywood was not new to him. He enjoyed his brief sojourn in the cinema kingdom, though he modestly admits

that he could not, conscientiously, accept bouquets for his ability as an actor.

Both Mr. and Mrs. List flew to Prague upon an invitation from the Czech Government to give a series of broadcast recitals in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Czech Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. List gave the first radio broadcast in France of Gershwin's Concerto in F. Not even a world war interfered with his career.

YEHUDI MENUHIN

✧ *Violinist* ✧

THOUGH Yehudi Menuhin was the most remarkable child prodigy of twentieth-century music, his parents, strange to say, were not themselves musicians. They did, however, have a deep appreciation of good music, and fortunately, they were both educators, who understood children. They were also wise parents, quick to realize the talent they had produced and eager to give it every chance to develop.

Yehudi's father had come to America directly from Palestine. His mother, of Tartar blood, had come from Yalta, in the Crimea. Though their boy was born in the melting pot of New York City, April 22, 1916, the family moved to San Francisco when Yehudi was only nine months old. Here the father became superintendent of Hebrew Schools and here Yehudi Menuhin grew up.

Though, like most young couples, the Menuhins began married life with very little spare cash, they loved music enough to spend every cent they could afford on concerts and recitals. They were particularly eager to hear the weekly concerts of the San Francisco Orchestra. The problem was what to do with their baby, Yehudi, since this was before professional baby sitters could be found. Nowadays,

a young couple would probably be content to stay home and listen to broadcasts or records. But this was before the days of radio, and recorded music was still thin and scratchy. One need only listen to a 1918 record to understand why real music lovers wanted "live" music.

The Menuhins solved the problem when their boy was only a little more than a year old. With some misgiving as to whether they could keep him quiet, they took him along to a concert. To their astonishment, the child sat perfectly still and listened intently. Reassured as to the baby's concert manners, they continued to take him with them whenever they went. After some time, they noticed that he appeared to be fascinated by the violins. When he learned to talk, he told them that he wanted to play "that instrument," pointing his chubby finger at Mr. Louis Persinger, the concert-master. Time came when Yehudi added that he wanted to study with "that man."

When the Menuhins acquired a piano, it did not greatly interest Yehudi. Young as he was, he knew what he wanted, and, young as he was, he was right about it.

Young persons are often supposed to know what they want to do by the time they reach their middle teens. A great many, however, do not know even at the end of their college years. It is also common for young people to think they know what they want, only to change their minds as they grow older and see more things to do. The genius is always many jumps ahead of the average because he knows very early what he wants to do. Two other characteristics always present in a genius are a perseverance that keeps him from being sidetracked; and capacity, far above the average, for diligent and constant work. No genius ever talks about how hard he works, since his work is his love.

As soon as Yehudi could hold a small-sized violin, his parents got one, to see if he had talent. As his father later said, "We secured a teacher and let him try." The teacher was Sigmund Anker, and Yehudi was three when he tried.

From the very start his progress was steady and rapid. His parents were astonished. So was the teacher. Before long, the child was actually playing.

Deeply impressed by his music, a woman musician arranged to have him play for a group of professional musicians invited to her studio especially to hear him. Among them was Alfred Hertz, conductor of the San Francisco Symphony. Mature musicians are usually distrustful of child prodigies knowing that, more often than not, the first flash of brilliance is like a flame that soon dies down, not strong enough to burn steadily through years of growth. Listening to Yehudi, however, the reserved attitude of the musicians changed to enthusiastic wonder. This, plainly, was not the immature playing they had anticipated.

When Mr. Persinger, the concertmaster, whose own playing had impressed the small child, was asked to listen to Yehudi, he at first demurred, refusing for some time even to hear him. How could he know that this very child was to spread his own fame as a teacher far and wide? When he did hear the boy play, he immediately took him as a pupil.

Having now "that man" to teach him, Yehudi made wonderful progress, both musically and technically. Day by day, he played better, absorbing everything taught him as a sponge absorbs water.

When Mr. Persinger gave Yehudi a new work to study, he would first explain its general character, after which

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they worked at it phrase by phrase, the teacher playing a phrase and the boy imitating. The musical side was always stressed first: interpretation, phrasing, tone and color. Studying the standard works for violin and practicing the exercises invented for him by his teacher, Yehudi's technical development progressed side by side with his musicianship. "The manner in which he grasped things as we went along," Mr. Persinger said, "was a constant source of joy and surprise to me." At the age of six the boy was able to give what his teacher considered creditable performances of the classic violin compositions.

About four years after his first lesson, the little boy first played in public at a Young People's Concert of the San Francisco Symphony. He was eight when his parents took him to Europe, for the first time, to study with Adolph Busch. At that early age, he also began to have lessons with Georges Enesco, Roumanian violinist and composer, with whom he continued to work, between concert engagements and tours, through his boyhood and early manhood. Menuhin, the artist, is Enesco's pupil.

When the eight-year-old violinist appeared with the famous Lamoureux Orchestra in Paris, the French audience went wild over his masterly playing. He was a phenomenon, and his success was phenomenal. Thereafter, the Menuhins took their boy to Europe in the summers for study with Enesco. They bought a villa in France. In the period between the two World Wars, ocean travel was much less expensive, and American school teachers could afford more frequent vacations in Europe. It was the custom for most foreign artists, who, like Enesco, played in America during the winter season, to return to Europe for the summer. When Enesco came to America, Yehudi had

more lessons with him, while, between times, he continued lessons with Persinger.

He was nine when he played in New York City for the first time. After this New York début, which took place at the Manhattan Opera House, January 17, 1926, sensational engagements were offered him, but the Menuhins refused to allow their small boy's talents to be exploited. He was permitted to play in public only as often as musical and artistic development required, his energy being reserved for physical growth and study. Again back in San Francisco, the boy played the Lalo Spanish Symphony with the orchestra he had heard first as an infant only seven years before. Mr. Persinger conducted. The boy was already performing works of difficult order.

That year he begged to study the Beethoven Concerto. But Mr. Persinger insisted that he must first study the Mozart E-flat Concerto. This occurred on a Wednesday, and Mr. Persinger spent about an hour and a half showing the boy how to practice the Mozart concerto. On Thursday and Friday, Yehudi spent about three and a half hours each day practicing it. On Saturday, when he went to his lesson, he had the whole concerto memorized. When, not long afterward, he played its slow movement for the great musical poet and pianist, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, the artist was moved to tears over such beauty and understanding.

Quite aside from his extraordinary musical gifts, the small boy's reasoning powers were astonishing. His general intelligence, like his musical intelligence, was far beyond his years. Endowed with robust health, with singular aptitude for his instrument, with the ability to understand and grasp ideas quickly, to memorize so rapidly that retainment was almost instant, with such remarkable powers of concentra-

tion, young Menuhin, at ten was where even a good music student might be, with good fortune, at twenty. In fact, the boy's quickness made restraint something of a problem for his teacher. He showed the tendency—common to young pupils with quick fingers—to run away with passage work, though the passage work he was mastering was difficult enough to give pause to mature violinists. He also showed a tendency to hasten over a slow movement, which is natural in young players who have not learned repose. But even this he had corrected by the time he played the Mozart slow movement for Gabrilowitsch. His keen sense of humor also often helped him to grasp an elusive point, after his teacher discovered that by appealing to it he could sometimes make the boy understand his music better.

When a child devotes so much time to a chosen study, one wonders how much school life he can have. Yehudi had none, for he never went to school. His life was altogether different from the school routine of most boys.

Though an educator, his father did not believe that a child must go to school just because he is six. Yehudi's two younger sisters did not go to school either. These parents could educate their children themselves. They began by letting them hear good music, see the finest paintings, originals or copies, and listen while the best literature was read to them. When the children learned to read for themselves, the parents were careful in their selection of books and magazines. Taste in literature and the arts was important to the Menuhins, and their children were first exposed to cultural influences. When they began to want to know about something, only then were they permitted to study it. Then, with curiosity aroused, they showed a desire to

learn, they considered study a privilege. Yehudi never had to practice the violin. He wanted to. Feeling that he was being allowed to practice three hours a day, he never grew tired of it.

When very young, the boy was permitted to practice only two and a half hours a day. Later it came to be three hours. Still later, when he was preparing for a concert, he practiced four. Every day, he had to play or walk in the open air, even when he was in New York preparing for a concert. At such times, his parents wanted him to be out of doors an extra hour and to sleep nine hours, in order to keep well and sturdy. As he began to achieve fame at such an early age, his parents cautioned people never to praise him to his face, never to call him a genius or a wonder child. He was not to be praised even for his success. In this way, the boy remained a natural, simple child with no idea that he was different from the average boy, or that his manner of life and study was different. His father said, "You might call me a human watch dog, trying to keep evil or negative or interfering influences or 'advice' away from our children."

Besides music, Yehudi was taught languages, literature, and history. When he was eight and a half, he was examined by the school authorities of San Francisco, who found him already prepared for high school. His early trips to Europe naturally helped him learn languages, so that by the time he was eleven, he could speak three. He read *Les Misérables* in French. Shakespeare was his favorite author. He read the Talmud. At nine, he was reading *The Nation* "to keep up with other thoughts." Mathematics "amused" him very much. He learned to play chess. Having a very in-

quisitive mind, he manifested a thirst for knowledge of any sort, and his capacity seemed inexhaustible.

A natural result of all this was that he did not associate with other boys of his own age. "They would not have understood him," said his father. Childish games did not interest young Yehudi, for he was already interested in subjects that appeal to more mature minds. Though he was far from being like the average child, he remained a modest, natural boy. Being intellectually far beyond his years, he had marked capacities for enjoyment, too. In company, he was serious and dignified, much more self-possessed than other children. Yet with the guidance of his parents, he grew up absolutely unaware that his life had been unusual.

Possessing this early respect for learning, Yehudi passed his youth regarding life as "a university." Just being alive was a golden opportunity to learn, of which he made the most, without waste of time and energies. He was capable of thoughtful observations, of making musical appraisals and musical distinctions while still a little boy.

When Yehudi was eleven, he appeared as soloist with the New York Symphony Orchestra under Fritz Busch, playing the Beethoven Concerto, which he had begged to be allowed to study the year before. Musical news had been full of reports about the beauty, finish, and assurance of the child's playing. Already, he had become a celebrity and Carnegie Hall was filled. The response might have overwhelmed an adult artist, who understood what it meant. But this was the kind of thing that Yehudi's parents kept from him, so that he did not realize his own importance. He was simply a little boy playing a concerto that he loved, as beautifully as he knew how. But the concerto

was not a child's piece. It was one of the greatest compositions ever written for violin.

Of his playing at that time, the music critic, Olin Downes wrote, "his fluency, confidence and aplomb might well have been envied by older players. But it was in the slow movement, which is a great test of a musician's sincerity and depth of feeling, and in the finale, so surely and delightfully performed, that a boy of eleven proved conclusively his right to be ranked with the outstanding interpreters of this music." Another writer noted that in little more than seven years from the time he had begun to study, he had become a mature artist with a virtuoso's repertoire.

Shortly after this concert, Yehudi gave his first New York solo recital in December of 1927, a full-sized program, playing two hours. The rush for tickets at the box office was so great that the house was SOLD OUT almost at once after the announcement. There was not even standing room left, and the stage was filled with extra chairs to accommodate as much of the overflow as possible. The boy was now famous.

The writer was present on that sensational occasion, and occupied a seat on the stage. Only a narrow passageway had been kept open to permit the little artist to walk from the door, at one side of the stage to its center, where the great black piano stood. That vast and brilliant auditorium, packed to the last row of the top gallery with expectant music lovers, its boxes filled with famous musicians, was an awesome sight. What must it have meant to the small boy who was responsible for the assembled multitude! Excitement was in the air.

Suddenly, amid the buzz and bustle, the ceiling lights

were dimmed and an instant hush swept through the hall—the tense hush that always precedes by a few seconds the opening of the artist's door.

Then a sturdy little fair-haired boy appeared, and applause burst like an explosion. While the clapping and shouting continued, the attractive-looking child, carrying his three-quarter-size violin in one hand and the bow in the other, moved along the narrow passage through the closely packed people, to the front and center of the stage. He wore short, black velvet knickers and a white bloused shirt with short sleeves and open neck. Black slippers and white socks completed the costume. One chubby leg gave an enchanting little backward kick each time he bowed. Mr. Persinger followed his pupil, placed music on the piano rack, to play his accompaniments. The boy looked perfectly at ease, neither nervous nor self-conscious. With a businesslike little air, he handed his instrument to his teacher to be tuned to the piano's A, and stood waiting. Mr. Persinger tuned the violin, returned it to his pupil, sat down at the piano. He flattened his music, turned to see if the boy was ready to begin. Yehudi tucked his instrument under his chin comfortably, looked at his teacher and stood ready.

When the little boy drew his bow across the strings, the hushed audience heard nothing little about the tone. It was a full, round, sweet tone, with nothing childish about it. His music flowed on with confidence, for he knew what he wanted it to say. It was beauty from start to finish.

Many offers now poured in to play here, play there, play everywhere. Managers were eyeing this little artist greedily. His days and nights could have been filled with concert engagements. Wealthy people offered him as much as \$5000

to play at private parties. Most parents, flattered and proud, might have been tempted to accept as many engagements as possible for their wonder child. But the Menuhins refused these offers. Most of all, they wanted Yehudi to have time to live a happy, healthy life. After these successes, he was to play in public no more for a year. He would stay home with his family, play with his sisters, quietly pursue his studies, and practice.

Later, when Yehudi's sisters became accomplished pianists while they were still in their teens, the same ideas prevailed. Mr. Menuhin said that he and his wife were not interested in the quantity of their childrens' concerts. They were interested in the quality—how their children played. There was never any forcing in their development. These parents were most uncommon in their common sense, unique for their modesty, idealism, and wisdom. They kept aloof from vanity. After he was grown up, Yehudi continued his career as a concert artist, as he does today, but the parents never wanted their daughters to follow such a strenuous career.

In the audiences of both New York performances were Mr. Henry Goldman, of a prominent Wall Street banking firm, and Mrs. Goldman. So stirred were they by Yehudi's musicianship and virtuosity that they asked his father for the privilege of giving the young violinist, for his twelfth birthday, the best violin obtainable. The search for the violin began.

As the time drew near, some of the world's most treasured instruments were sent to Yehudi's hotel suite for him to play on, so he could choose the one he liked best. Days went by, while he played upon, and compared, the finest of violins. On his birthday, Efrem Zimbalist, one of the great

violinists of his time and a friend of the Goldmans, was present for the great decision. He had been an ardent admirer of the boy violinist, ever since he had first heard him play at the age of six in San Francisco. Zimbalist sat on the sofa between the Goldmans, while Yehudi, accompanied by Mr. Persinger, played one piece after another. Ending with the "Sacred and Solemn Prayer" of Händel, Yehudi made his decision. He would keep the Stradivarius, made in 1733, when its maker was almost ninety. With tears in his eyes, so affected had he been by the sheer beauty of the boy's playing of Händel, Zimbalist remarked, "Yehudi is right in his choice. This is one of the most marvelous Strads on earth, but Yehudi is the most marvelous violinist of the age."

The old violin-maker, Stradivarius, had also been pleased, apparently, with that instrument, for he had inscribed the violin, "In my ninetieth year." A full-sized violin, perfect in form, tone, and workmanship, the varnish a warm dark red, it was one of the few Strads still preserved in its original state. In the body of the instrument, a black seal showed the combined coats-of-arms of the Prince and Princess Khevenhueller, who dwelt in Vienna in the 18th century. About a century later, it had been owned by a great violinist, Josef Bohn, professor of violin at the Vienna Conservatory, who had taught Joachim and Ernst, two of the greatest of the 19th century violinists. From the Bohn family, the instrument had passed into the hands of the international violin dealer, Emil Herrmann, from whom the Goldmans bought it for Yehudi for sixty thousand dollars.

By this time, Yehudi knew most of the great violin concertos. His managers, Evans and Salter, complying with

the wishes of the parents by steadfastly refusing to push the boy, would not accept all offers that were coming in for American and European engagements. They contracted for a carefully selected and limited number of the principal cities. When Yehudi was twelve, they refused about \$200,000 worth of additional offers. Engagements were booked far apart, and for but two months of the year. From about one hundred European offers that season, in which the highest honors, together with large fees, were to have been conferred upon the boy, only two were accepted by mid-February. He would play Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven Concertos in Berlin with the Berlin Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, and also in Paris with the Symphony Orchestra of the Société du Conservatoire. The city of Dresden went so far as to offer to suspend its opera on any evening convenient to Yehudi, for the honor of having him appear with their renowned orchestra.

While adults considered, decided, and planned, the boy practiced, and looked upon these forthcoming important and brilliant events as—fun, anticipating them with great delight. Afterward, he was to retire again for nearly a year.

Critics called him a “very disturbing Wunderkind,” remarking that “no one expects a child, genius though he be, to encompass the spirit of the Beethoven Concerto,” yet he played this great composition with the repose and musical intelligence of a mature, adult artist. “He seemed to know what he wanted at every note,” one critic observed, “and his desires were uncanny approximations of the intentions of the composer.” This remark was made about Yehudi’s execution of the Brahms D minor Sonata. The conductor, Ernest Ansermet, said, “It is as though Mozart

had come back," and "in a world so full of despair, the appearance of a Yehudi Menuhin restores the joy of living."

The greatest musicians were among the young boy's friends. When in London, at fourteen, young Yehudi bought a wire-haired terrier as a present for Fritz Kreisler, the greatest violinist of all, whose own terrier had died. When he was crossing the Atlantic again, at fifteen, he discovered that Toscanini, the celebrated conductor was on board. The two had become friends the first time the Maestro had heard the boy play. The first morning out, the pair retired to a private music salon to enjoy a busman's holiday—they wanted to make music. Every morning during the crossing, Yehudi played for Toscanini—a man old enough to be his grandfather—and the two discussed music interpretations.

Since his teacher, the Roumanian composer-violinist-conductor, Georges Enesco, was a great favorite at the Roumanian Court, Queen Marie wanted the Menuhins to bring their boy to the palace for a visit. Mr. Menuhin, however, did not fancy the idea. He knew that Yehudi would be showered with flattery and praise in the Royal Court, and there he himself would have had to allow it. Feeling that such an experience would be bad for his son, he declined. The Queen was much disappointed. Later, when she sent an urgent invitation to luncheon, they accepted. The boy King, Michael, was present, and Yehudi was not slow to note the homage that was paid to him. He disapproved of the low bowing of the grownups before the boy King, and their lofty manner of address, remarking afterward, "He's just a boy like any other boy."

When he was seventeen, Yehudi started on a round-the-world concert tour, which lasted almost two years. After

that, he retired to the family's new ranch in California, for a two-year vacation from concertizing. During this period he studied new works to add to his repertoire.

His sisters, Hephzibah and Yalta, who had now become accomplished pianists, played piano and violin sonatas with their brother. Yehudi presented his sister Hephzibah to the music world, when they played together in joint concerts.

In Paris, the violinist and some musician friends once played together from early evening until three in the morning, encompassing all of the Beethoven quartets in one sitting,—a true musicians' spree.

In his later teens, Yehudi owned six violins. He had a copy of his fine Stradivarius made to practice on, reserving the rare old instrument for performance. He said, "Violins get tired and need a rest just as we do." He still kept his little three-quarter-size instrument with which, as he said, "I started."

When his father remarked that after two years of travel, it might be hard for Yehudi to settle down, General Motors presented the nineteen-year-old violinist with a Cadillac as a surprise. Presumably the Cadillac helped in settling down. In New York that same year, Yehudi took dancing lessons for two hours a day, and his first dance at a wedding reception was more exciting to him than taking a concert bow.

Through study with the scholarly Enesco, the young artist learned to go back to original sources. Working on the Urtexts—the original texts—of J. S. Bach, he came to regard the unaccompanied violin works of that great composer as the highest form of all music. Only the most competent violinists, the most thorough musicians are capable

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of interpreting these master works, and not all audiences are capable of understanding them. They are music for the real music lover and the musician. Concerning Menuhin's playing of a Bach slow movement, a reviewer wrote that he "really struck fire. His tone was suffused with warmth and color, he breathed the phrases rather than bowed them, and he held his listeners rapt with the beauty of sound."

In 1944 he made a quick war tour of England and the liberated countries, often playing where there was no concert hall. He played in Brussels less than two miles from the fighting front, in Salisbury Cathedral, on the plane elevator of an aircraft carrier. He played the Mendelssohn Concerto in Paris, for the first time since the Nazis had forbidden it, five years earlier.

During the years just before and just after the War, he played a good many other "firsts." In 1938 he introduced the lost concerto of Robert Schumann to American audiences. A few years after the war, he presented a new work by an Israeli composer to a New York audience, as well as a "new" violin concerto written by Mendelssohn over a hundred years ago, when he was twelve years old. This had been sent to the violinist by one of Mendelssohn's descendants.

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